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THE CHRIST

THE SON OF GOD

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Publisher's Note

The present one-volume edition of *The Christ, the Son of God* has been abridged from Abbé Fouard's work of the same name. A bibliography, extensive notes and appendices have been omitted in this edition. The two-volume work is also available.

THE CHRIST
THE SON OF GOD

A LIFE OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

By THE ABBÉ CONSTANT FOUARD

TRANSLATED FROM THE FIFTH EDITION
WITH THE AUTHOR'S SANCTION

ONE-VOLUME EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of French is so widely diffused in English society that publishers wisely refuse to undertake to print translations from the French excepting only works of science or of special value. Nevertheless, Messrs. Longmans have very wisely undertaken to publish an English translation of *La Vie de N.S. Jesus Christ* by Abbé Fouard, Professor of Theology in Rouen. Such a work will be read by multitudes who do not command a knowledge of the French language.

The singularly able and excellent work can need no commendation. It is already in its fifth edition. When it first appeared it had the commendation of the late Cardinal de Bonnechose, Archbishop of Rouen, who well described it as uniting "the consolations of piety with the explanations of true science on the text of Scripture." In 1881, Leo XIII sent his benediction to the author, and many cardinals and a large number of the bishops of France gave it their approbation.

Abbé Fouard describes his book in these words: "This Life of Jesus is an act of faith." By a deliberate judgment he refused to admit both controversy and criticism. He would not prefix even an introduction establishing the authenticity of the Gospels. Nevertheless, he has given in the notes * to his preface a brief summary of those who have attacked the books of the New Testament, and those who have defended them, together with a long list of authors, French, English, and German, on which his history is founded.

Throughout the whole course of his work abundant notes * are found at the foot of the page to interpret the text, and to illustrate the events recorded by extensive researches made by himself in his pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Abbé Fouard calls attention to a fact which appears seldom to be borne in mind. He says it was only in the Middle Ages that men began to write the life of our Lord. From the beginning until then the living and Divine tradition of faith, in which the name, the person, the character, the words, and the works of our Divine Saviour pervaded the Christian world, was enough to draw the hearts of men to Himself. The uninspired writers, founding themselves upon the living consciousness of the faith, wrote of their Divine Master as of a Person to whom they bore a personal relation. They interpreted the Scriptures of the New Testament as it were in His presence and by the memory of His own teaching. Their baptismal creed, which came to them "by hearing," filled them with "the word of Christ" and the knowledge of His mind — for instance, the Homilies of Saint John Chrysostom in the East, and of Saint Augustine in the West. Their teaching was not historical, but didactic and devotional, of which the *Catena Aurea* of Saint Thomas is a full proof.

The intellectual state of the following ages took an historical form. Then began the compilation of the life of our Lord. Jansenius of Ghent, Salmeron, Tillemont, Calmet, and De Ligny began to reduce the sacred history to chronological order. From that day to this the life of our Lord has been elaborated

* These notes are omitted in this edition.

more and more in the way of history; until at last some men, ceasing to realise their personal relation to a Living Person, have come to regard Him as an historical person to whom they owe no duty, or as a mythical person who never existed.

Not so among those who inherit the living and Divine consciousness which animated the early ages of the faith. The name, the person, the character, the words and the works of our Divine Master have ever been perpetuated in the daily life of those who adore Him in the unity of the faith. The history of Abbé Fouard unites the sacred narrative of the three-and-thirty years of our Saviour's earthly life with the living consciousness of faith, in which the mutual personal relation and the mutual personal love of the Divine Master and His Disciples are as living and sustaining at this day as they were when He ascended into Heaven. To all such this Life of Our Lord will be a golden book.

HENRY EDWARD CARDINAL MANNING.

THE TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

The only words contained in Monsieur Fouard's Fifth Edition which we have omitted here come under the heading, *Avant-Propos de la Seconde Edition* — a short page and a half in length, in recognition of the popular and critical welcome the work had received, and as an acknowledgment of indebtedness to the prelates and professors whose counsels and corrections had helped largely toward perfecting later editions, but most of all for an expression of gratitude to that princely scholar, Leo XIII, whose Brief of April 2, 1881, conferred upon our author the Apostolic benediction, with the Theologian's congratulations. Besides the Holy Father, many Cardinals and ecclesiastics have testified to their delight at the learning and faith, which indeed have made their impression upon every reader of this Life, from the humblest Christian to the great servant of God and God's people, under whose patronage we are happy in being able to place this translation.

A word of explanation on some technical points may be of service to the student. Bossuet's translation of the Gospels was preferred by the Abbé Fouard, because, as he says, "though oftentimes full of archaisms and curious felicities of speech, yet, since it is always luminous, and the work of a genius, it conveys the Master's meaning better than any other." Here the method to be followed by the interpreter was fixed beyond cavil by his original. The author is well known on the continent as a Hellenist, and his helpful re-settings of the hallowed sentences are not the least valuable feature of his periods, which bear their burden of erudition so happily. A cursory comparison will demonstrate the impossibility of making any received English version take the place of our author's illuminations of ancient Codices.

But Professor Fouard is eminent also as a Hebraist; hence, in some instances, he has not hesitated to revise the spelling of proper names, in consonance with our fuller understanding of their derivation and significance; for the more familiar names, however, he retains the usual Vulgate form. Doubtless he lays as little stress upon such technical divergences as do all who set the matter higher than the manner. But here, as everywhere else, needless to say, our sole aim has been to find the fairest equivalent of the original form. Perhaps we may be pardoned for adding that we have been far from desiring to introduce strange forms into the present orthographical chaos, which today offers us such differences as Nabuchodonsor and Nebuchadnezzar, to dismay the Catholic or non-Catholic layman.

Finally, it would betoken something like ingratitude to let this edition go without a word of recognition for its many well-wishers: for, after the Abbé Fouard himself, whose unvarying courtesy has contributed toward making our toil altogether a pleasure, this book stands to the Very Reverend Thomas S. Campbell, S.J., and to other dear friends of his Company, in relations much like that of a son to his home and kinsfolk; while, continuing the figure, our translation has the honor of claiming as its godfather and mentor that ripe scholar and

theologian, the Reverend Professor Fivez, of the New York Provincial Seminary. To his self-sacrificing interest and generosity we owe it that no greater blunders have been committed than now, perchance, and despite all such affectionate pains, must meet the eyes of our indulgent reader.

G. F. X. G.

Day of St. Anthony of Padua,
St. Joseph's Seminary, Troy, N. Y.

PREFACE

This Life of Jesus is an Act of Faith. We have had no intention of pursuing through these pages a controversy in which so many minds have been matched since the opening of our century; we only desire to make the Saviour better known and loved. Surely the times are propitious; for the Gospels, combated at a thousand points, have triumphed over their critics. The attacking party and the defenders alike appear to have called a truce. What is left for this our generation, unless it be to avail ourselves of the inspired witnesses, and by drawing from them an account of the actions of Jesus, demonstrate that He, Whose death some have published to the world, lives still, is indeed the very Life itself?

Yet since such a throng of writers have already essayed the same plan, any attempt to rewrite the life of the Saviour after them may seem superfluous. Our excuse is in the sublimity of its Subject, which no study can encompass wholly; for the Divinity of the Christ is the object of eternal contemplation, and as in every age His Humanity appears under new features, so it will always demand a different portraiture. This is why we have so many narratives, which, one after another, have sketched that Figure whose proper lineaments we need but recall to mind, in order to perceive all that these great writers leave still to be attempted.

The Gospels, explained by their pastors, sufficed the faithful in the first ages of Christianity. The Saviour's daily life on earth, the places and the dates of His wondrous deeds, were still too memorable, too vividly impressed upon their minds, for need of any reminder to refresh their memory. It was by dying for Him that these heroic generations confessed the Lord Jesus. Yet even then, error had endeavoured to deface the figure of the Divine Master, and the apocryphal gospels show to what a state it would have degraded Him. To dispel these visionary mists it was only necessary to confront them with the witnesses of the doings of Christ. This task was imposed upon Tatian of Syria in the second century, upon Ammonius in the third, upon Eusebius of Cæsarea in the fourth. By arranging the Evangelists' record of the facts, in their order of occurrence, they composed therefrom a *harmony of the Gospels*.

Some of the Fathers followed this example, but the majority among them were busied rather in interpreting the doctrine of the Saviour, and it was only in the Middle Ages that lives of Jesus began to be written. Even at that period the historians meditate more than they describe. Only read the "Chain of Gold" by Saint Thomas the "Holy Eminences" attributed to the Seraphic Doctor, the austere pages of Ludolphe le Chartreux; everywhere you feel the flame of love which feeds at their heart; it seems as though these men, for whom the body exists no longer, could not study the Saviour by any light save that of Tabor. Giotto has painted this transfigured Christ on the walls of Assisi, and we see him there even as the Middle Ages adored Him, permitting the streaming rays of His Divinity to escape and irradiate His body, His head crowned with a glory as magnificent when suffering the scourages of the executioners as in

the triumph of the Resurrection. It was indeed a figure which was typical of those ages of faith and charity, more absorbed in imitating that Model, than anxious to set forth its details in the cold light of day.

In the centuries that followed the life of Jesus assumed a more doctrinal shape. Jansenius of Ghent, Salmeron, Tillemont, and Calmet enriched their commentaries with treasures of erudition; unhappily they did not base their researches upon a narrative, which would make the life of the Saviour natural and effective. Père de Ligny profited by the labours of his predecessors; but like them he neglected the rules of art, and contented himself with arranging the Gospel texts in their chronological order, merely inserting the glosses requisite to preserve the connection. Even after his work the History of Jesus Christ remained still unwritten.

But while these expositors crowded into their pages the traditions of eighteen centuries, the Reformation, after having overturned the faith of our fathers in Germany, began to undermine its very foundations. The Holy Books, though for a long time revered, were in their turn assaulted by error; authenticity, inspiration, veracity, all were called in question. Strauss came to consider Jesus as a fabulous personage; Baur treats the Gospels as a legend, resting upon an historical foundation, but fanciful and imaginary so far as its wonders are concerned. Such venturesome essays among ancient beliefs could not fail to attract the genius of Frenchmen, lovers of clearness and light, and it only needed the artistic and imaginative skill of M. Renan to lend a certain glitter to their inventions.

Their success was not, however, lasting. England, always severely serious in the domain of science, treated this work, which had so astonished us, as a romance. Germany smiled to see that we were taking theories already refuted by them, for the final verdict of exegetical criticism. Today what remains of the scandal to which it gave rise? No doctrine, no new school; only one more name to write under that of Celsus, Marcion, and all the rest, who for eighteen centuries have attacked the Godhead in Jesus Christ. Like so many others, this last assault has been fruitless, the figment has faded away — yet only to give place to theories more formidable, as they are more specious and sophistical.

Scorning tradition, which might have enlightened them, these hardy expositors would have us accept the Gospels as Apostolic teaching augmented and disfigured by the addition of a new body of texts in the course of years. To their apprehension the sacred writings are not therefore a history, made from the original, but a compilation from a succession of narratives; and nothing could be more ingenious, yet at the same time more arbitrary, than their innumerable speculations, which are always at variance with each other, as they vainly strive to point out what were, after all, the original features of the Books we possess today. We can see toward what end these innovators are working. By rejecting any settled dates for the Gospels, they in fact destroy all their authority; for what credence could be accorded to a confused collection of reminiscences, jotted down by a thousand various hands and in epochs most at variance in spirit. Concede this point and there would be an end of all certitude

as regards the Life of Jesus. Indeed all powers that lie deepest down in the Christian heart have risen in defence of the heavenly message. Marvels of erudition have been accomplished, and the Protestant churches, whence sprung the evil, have not been the last in exorcising it. Even in the judgment of liberal investigation, truth rests on the side of tradition; our Gospels are still regarded as the work of those who either saw the Master Himself, or heard His Apostles. Written by the Spirit of God, independently of each other, they shine forth in the white light of truth with a radiance which nothing can obscure.

We shall be forgiven for not restating here the proofs which have put the authenticity and veracity of this Record beyond cavil or suspicion; one volume would not be enough to contain them. Our wisest course was to refer the reader to the apologists who have triumphantly defended them, and pursue the plan which we have indicated above: to gather from the Gospels a history of Jesus — comparing the four holy witnesses in order to show how their narratives, varying as they do in form, intention, and origin, nevertheless explain and confirm each other. To attain this object, let us see what guides we shall follow.

The first and most trustworthy of all is the Gospel itself. We possess it in the very language which the sacred historians employed,[1] and one must read it in the original tongue to appreciate all its charms; but it is quite as necessary not to neglect the versions which were composed from the first ages; for, while they enlighten us as to the original meaning of the text, they enable us at the same time to decide between different readings. Everyone knows, indeed, that there are no longer any Greek manuscripts of the first three centuries, and that the oldest copies are only duplicates, made three hundred years after the epoch in which the Evangelists lived. During that long period of transmission, different readings were multiplied, yet viewed as a guarantee of the genuineness of the original, no evidence equals the translations written by disciples of the Apostles, because they give us a faithful reflection of the Greek Gospels, as they were known at the birth of the Church.

Upon this question it is equally incumbent upon us to consult the first Fathers: their preaching, as it is little more than a commentary upon the good Tidings, reproduces the Gospel for us, almost in its entirety, and, consequently we can re-construct from their homilies so many versions antedating any which we know today. But it is principally because they explain Holy Writ that they must ever remain our teachers. No research, no science, however profound it may be, can supply us with what they then possessed — the actual world as Jesus found it, the selfsame aspect of localities and affairs, and further still, their opportunities for daily intercourse with those of the faithful, who, having lived in the society of the Apostles, could relate their instructions. All these circumstances once taken into consideration, lend such tremendous weight to the teaching of the Fathers that even Protestant theologists have been struck by it. They declare that "to evade or contravene that common belief which existed among

1 We do not even except the First Gospel, for it appears most likely to us that the Greek version from St. Matthew's original Aramean was made by the Apostle himself.

them would be foolish and unavailing, it would be to struggle against the resistless rush of a torrent." We have purposely employed the phraseology of Waterland and Bull; although the evidence of liberal investigation, it is no less uncompromising than the rulings of the Council of Trent.

Accordingly we shall endeavour to follow tradition closely in interpreting those words of the Saviour which are the immovable foundation of Christian dogma. Here there is no room for novelties, for Truth is unchangeable. Yet it is not enough, in a Life of the Christ, to set forth the Evangelical Doctrine; it is necessary to describe the places where the years of the Saviour's life were spent; to learn from contemporary history what thoughts then occupied men's minds, what manner of people they were among whom Jesus lived. Upon these points the Gospels are sparing of detail; written for readers of their own era who had under their very eyes the life of the Orient, they are constantly making allusions to customs differing widely from ours, and suppose that their readers are familiar with manners to which we indeed are more or less strangers. This is the vanished world it behooves us to rehabilitate here, in order that the Gospel may be understood as it was in the day of its appearance.

Just now it would seem that everything is ripe for such a restoration of the past. Never has the East been better known; the Aramaic Paraphrases, the traditions contained in the Talmud and the Jewish writers have been tediously conned over; Egypt and Assyria, which traced such deep marks upon the monuments of Judea, have at last revealed the secrets of their institutions; in a word, the knowledge of Hebrew antiquities has become as entire and intelligible to our generation as the archæology of Greece and Rome. At the same time learned achievements in chronology, based upon astronomical calculations, have established the date for us, even to the month and the day. Who does not see the advantages offered by such vast stores of knowledge? We cannot even set down here the long array of authors whose works we have examined, and to whom we have been indebted; we have borrowed much from Germany and England. Nevertheless, however highly we may have esteemed our predecessors, we have been studious to refer to original sources and to accept nothing except upon trustworthy testimony.

An inestimable advantage has been accorded us, above and beyond all these others — one which has enabled us to make the places in which the Saviour lived better known and realised. Surrounded by friends, who lent us a co-operation which was as intelligent and sympathetic as it was kindly, we traversed the Holy Land, "from Dan to Beer-Sheba," from Gaza to Libanus, following the Master step by step, over those hilltops which were the witnesses of His birth, into the valley of the shadow of death, wherein He faced temptation; and along the borders of the lake which He loved. On every hand we have seen the same world which met the eyes of Jesus — the cities, whose gates still close so soon as ever the first torchlight flares up in the deepening twilight to dispel the darkness from their dwellings; the troops of dogs overrunning the deserted streets, still venturing to lick the beggar's body as he lies yonder by the rich man's threshold; the pomp and ceremony of the marriage-feasts, the ban-

queting hall, with the wedding-guests reclining on purple and fine linen; the wail of the mourners, the clamour of their lamentations mingling with the shrill notes of the flutes; and as we enter each town we still hear the plaintive monotone of the blind man's appeal, while the leper still attracts attention to his malady by his piercing moans; thence to the Desert of Jericho — the lonely track winding over wild and gloomy heights, where the Bedouin, gaunt and hollow-eyed with hunger, now as then lies in wait for the traveller who may fall within his reach. In the Gospels all these pictures are indicated in a line, by a single stroke; it is only when viewed under the Eastern sky that they regain their fresh colours, in their clear native atmosphere.

It will be asked what rules we have observed in settling the relationship of the narratives. Saint Luke has given us the order of events connected with the childhood of Jesus; Saint John, those which bear upon the beginnings of His ministry. Indeed, the latter often goes so far as to mention the day and hour. Unfortunately, his testimony leaves much untold concerning the whole public life, or at least he only furnishes us with striking incidents, evidently selected with the design of setting forth the Divinity of the Saviour in higher relief. We must recur to the synoptical writers [2] to discover the sequence of events. Certainly, no research could require more careful handling; for the Evangelists, as their name implies, are bearers of good news — glad tidings — and in telling it to the world the Apostles have endeavoured, not so much to give us a complete chronicle, accompanied with precise dates, as simply to show forth in Jesus the Christ whom they adored. Saint Matthew thinks of Him only as the royal Messiah; to Saint Mark, He lives, the Son of God; as Saint Luke sees Him, He is the Saviour of the world. Each, absorbed in his own one view of the Fact Divine, recounts only what bears particularly upon his controlling thought.

In fact, Saint Matthew resolutely sacrifices chronology by attempting to associate more effectively marvellous occurrences, which actually took place under very different circumstances, and to this end connects parables which, without doubt, the Christ did not utter in the same discourse. The object of the Evangelist in grouping the doctrines, miracles, and parables of the Saviour is to mass the streaming rays of light in which the Life of Jesus gleamed upon his sight, and by thus concentrating events render them of a more radiant glory.

Saint Mark and Saint Luke have not neglected the succession of occurrences to such a marked degree. In fact, the latter, in so many words, announces that it is his intention to conform his narrative to this order. "Since so many," he says in his Prologue, "have undertaken to compose a narrative of the things believed among us in the manner in which those transmitted them to us who from the beginning did themselves witness them, and have been ministers of the Word, so I likewise, after having followed the course of all these things from their earliest outset, have conceived the plan of recounting these matters to you in their order, most excellent Theophilus, that thus you may be better able to recognise the truth of that which has been taught you." These words

2 This name has been applied to the first three Evangelists, because their narratives agree in general arrangement, and may be taken in at a glance. St. John has adoptd an entirely different method.

clearly denote Saint Luke's intention to leave Theophilus not simply an authentic record of the preaching of the Apostles, but furthermore, to construct a work in accordance with the rules of history. Wherefore, to insure perfect confidence in his work, he reminds him that he has been a careful student of the facts, that he has set them forth from their inception, with great exactness and in the order in which they took place. Hence he is fittest to be our guide in the disposition of events chronicled by the three synoptical writers, and we shall follow him with all the more confidence from the fact that his narrative is generally in harmony with that of Saint Mark.

We know too well what difficulties this question of chronology presents to think of insisting on the arrangment which we have adopted for this Life of the Lord. The main duty was to set some certain date for the principal events; for even if it could be proved that such and such miracles, or certain words of the Master, occurred a few weeks earlier or later, variances of this nature would affect the arrangement of His history very little. As to the minor events, whose order still remains subject to difference of opinion, we have thought it best to adopt what seemed the most reasonable construction.

In spite of all the care taken by our untiring friends in correcting this effort, more than one error has undoubtedly escaped our notice, and the work must still remain unworthy of its Subject. We have no other ground for hoping well of it beyond the knowledge of its fidelity to tradition, whose voice, growing more eloquent, as it comes down the ages, is now without a rival in its office as interpreter of the Saviour's words and deeds. God grant that it may have lost nothing of its force by coming from our lips. May its mighty truth touch men's hearts and revive therein their faith in Jesus. More than ever is the aid of that Divine Master now needed, for the latter years of the century grow daily more threatening. A secret disquiet alarms some amongst the most steadfast natures; an increasing license is disturbing men's minds, as the divisions of society become every day more apparent. The Christ is no longer among them, to console the poor and wretched ones, who, bent beneath their burdens, still angrily spurn His loving kindness, while the rich and powerful call sadly for a deliverer. For salvation, for help, they can turn nowhere but unto Jesus. Upon Him depends all that this world, all that our country has still to hope for or expect. Shattered and broken, menaced on every side, she shall surely rise again upon that day, when, with her children all reunited in the Christ, she shall have but one heart, one mind, one soul, in the sight of God. May our humble efforts be not altogether ineffectual in speeding that regeneration for which all hearts are longing. It is the single purpose of this book, and the sole glory we could desire for it.

BOISGUILLAUME (INSTITUTION JOIN-LAMBERT),
December 25, 1879.

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THE CHRIST

THE SON OF GOD

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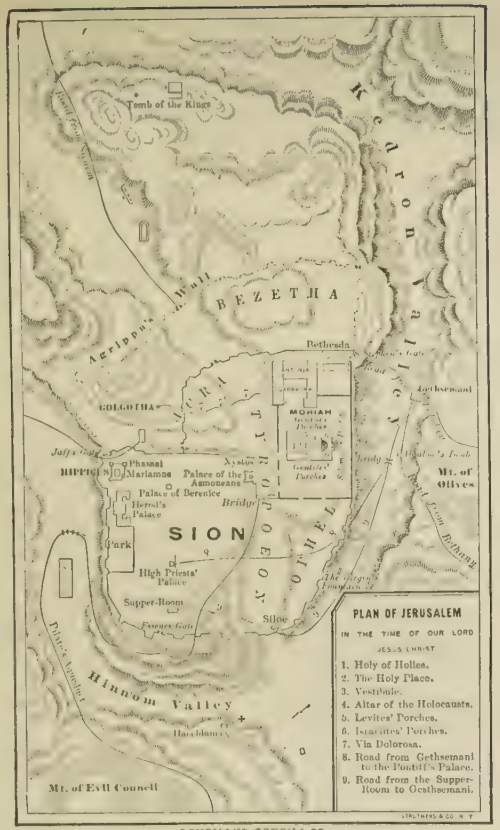

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MAP OF THE
Lake of
GENESARETH

R. R.—Ruins lying between Ain-et-Tin and Ouadi-el-Amoud which mark the site of Capharnaum.

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THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

BOOK FIRST

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

The Angel's Testimony

And Mary said to the Angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?"

Then answering, the Angel said: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: and therefore also The Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called THE SON OF GOD." (Saint Luke, i. 34–36.)

CHAPTER I

JUDEA IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Judea in the time of the Christ was despoiled of all her splendour. The Machabees, pontiffs and kings of Israel during one century, had in that time seen their glories vanish, together with their virtues. The power, so nobly exercised by Judas and his brothers, degenerated into despotism under their successors; their religious zeal became ambition; and the concord which had existed among the sons of Mathathias gave place to such profound divisions that, sixty-six years before the Christian era, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, two brothers sprung from this illustrious stock, were compelled to invoke the arbitration of Pompey to adjust their feuds and dissensions. The Roman general, already master of Syria, solemnly adjudged their differences at Damascus, and pronounced in favour of Hyrcanus. Resorting to arms, Aristobulus hazarded a desperate defence from the Mountain of the Temple; but in vain — defeat was inevitable. Hyrcanus remained sovereign of Judea, but under the authority of the governors of Syria and with the simple title of Ethnarch. Jerusalem for the first time saw the eagles within her walls. Pompey crossed the threshold of the Holy of Holies, and gazed in astonishment upon that sanctuary, devoid of idol or image. The sovereignty of Juda had run its course; the servitude of Israel was begun.

Very soon Hyrcanus lost even the shadow of command which had been spared him. Cæsar, the conqueror of Pompey, united Palestine to the Kingdom of Edom, and gave the government of these countries to an Idumean of noble race, Antipater. Phasaël and Herod, two sons of this prince, lent him their aid in the administration of affairs — one assuming the government of

Galilee, the other that of Judea; but their united efforts were ineffectual for the maintaining of a peace of any long duration. A descendant of the Machabees, Aristobulus, the brother of Hyrcanus, made his escape from Rome, where he was held as a captive, and essayed to regain the throne of his fathers, aided by his sons, Alexander and Antigonus. The arms of the last-named prince alone achieved any success; he made Phasaël prisoner, and constrained him to take his own life. Herod, more fortunate than his brother, eluded their conqueror, hurried to Rome, and was declared by the senate King of Judea. After three years of conflict, the victorious Latin legions reestablished his rule in Jerusalem. This was in the year 37 before Jesus Christ.

The patronage of Rome, which never belied its promises, Herod's own native genius for ruling, his union with Mariamne, the daughter of Hyrcanus, their former ethnarch — all seemed to insure him a tranquil reign. Yet the Idumean found in his nationality, his unhoped-for successes, his own restless and suspicious nature, too many sources of disquiet to permit of any peaceable enjoyment of his power. He could take no repose while a remnant of the Machabean line remained alive. Two princes of that family, as well as his father-in-law — Hyrcanus himself, broken down by years and misfortunes — were the first victims of Herod's distrust; then came the turn of Mariamne, the only one of his wives whom he had really loved; and finally, neither the two children he had had by her, nor Antipater (son of Doris, and his first-born) were spared the penalty of such suspicions. Only the death of the tyrant could set a limit to these cruelties.

In vain did Herod beautify Judea with splendid monuments, in order to divert attention from the bloody tragedies which encrimsoned his marble palaces. To the Jews, his vast amphitheatres were the scenes of spectacles as detestable as they were abhorrent. The baths and the porticos introduced novel customs; and the Roman eagle which spread its wings within the Temple profaned its sanctity. During thirty-four years the prince wearied himself in fruitless endeavours to make the people forget his origin and their servitude. Everything did but remind this nation, shuddering under his yoke, that the sceptre had indeed passed from the sons of Jacob to those of Esau.

Amid this universal demolition of Judaic institutions, one body alone withstood the tempests and retained its authority; this was the Sanhedrin — the national council, established by Moses according to some, while according to others it was first convened after the Captivity. The ascendancy which the prophets and doctors possessed over the people in those days of exile, the absence of the priests and of all external surroundings of their worship, the debasement into which the royal family had fallen after the return from Babylon, the difficulties surrounding any political and religious restoration — all these considerations had led the Jews to regard this sovereign assembly as a substitute for the monarchy.

The functions of the Sanhedrin were to interpret the Law, to adjudge more important cases, and to exercise an exact surveillance over the administration of affairs. Hence it became at one and the same time parliament, high court of

justice, and the supreme resort of instruction in Judea. Its seventy-one members represented the three classes of the nation: the priests (that is to say, the chiefs of the twenty-four sacerdotal classes), with whom were associated, under Herod and the Romans, the pontiffs (who were in this manner deprived of any temporal authority by their foreign masters); and the scribes, as doctors and interpreters of the Law; together with the ancients, chosen from among the elders of each tribe and family.

During four hundred years the authority of this council had remained absolute. Herod was the first to sap its strength; but shrewd as he showed himself in usurping all other powers, he could not entirely cripple the Sanhedrin. That mighty assembly continued its sittings in the very face of the tyrant, and survived his dynasty; for we see it, under the Romans, asserting its right to settle all questions of doctrine, to administer justice, and to direct in secret the movements of the people.

This, then, is the poor ghost of authority to which the power of Israel was finally reduced; yet what must be said of the deterioration of religion and manners? The last of the Machabees had allowed the pontificate to be dishonoured by permitting the scribes to assume a predominant influence. Relinquished to these doctors, so zealous to discuss in their elaborate commentaries the most trivial minutiae, the laws became mere matter for futile argument; and the numerous sects, each one arrogating to itself the right of interpreting the Law, furnish a most striking proof of the decline of Israel. The fame of three of these great parties has lived up to this day — the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, and (according to the testimony of Josephus) to be acquainted with this trio is to understand the ethics and the morals of all their contemporaries.

Whatever uncertainty we may feel as to the origin of Pharisaism, we believe its sources should be sought in that isolation which the Law of Jehovah imposed upon the Jews as a nation. To shun contact with idolatrous peoples, in order to preserve the worship of God in its purity, was one of the precepts constantly reiterated by Moses and the prophets. On the return from Babylon, Esdras and Nehemiah insisted upon this point with all the more earnestness because the defences which they could erect about the Holy Land were so feeble and so frequently infringed upon. This exclusiveness became a duty still more rigorous when the Syrian kings made apostasy obligatory, and when the High Priests Menelaus and Alcimus betrayed the faith by becoming the allies of their persecutors. All the generous hearts that Israel could count upon henceforth entrenched themselves in their despair, forming a band of picked souls whose zeal procured them the name of the Pietists — the Assideäns.

Under the leadership of Mathathias and his sons these children of Abraham had proved themselves invincible. Nothing was wanting of all that goes to make true heroism — austere, indomitable courage, a noble scorn of death, a living faith in the God who was their protector, and in the angels, who were their ministers and His. But peace once reestablished, this impetuous virtue knew not how to restrain itself; zeal developed into fanaticism; the love of fatherland gradually narrowed into a hatred of strangers; to fly from their im-

pure contact became a law for these Assideäns — a law which they desired to impose upon all Israel. From this, in fact, came the Aramaic name of Parousch, Pharisee (that is to say, a separatist), which was given them by those Jews who opposed their teachings.

Neither the Machabees nor the priests who surrounded them followed the Pharisees in these views. Obliged to maintain political relations with other countries, yielding moreover to the attractions of power and wealth, the new princes of Judea rejected the maxims prescribed by these zealots; they confined their observance to the letter of the law, to the *sedacha*, so highly praised in the Holy Books, and it was from this trait that they got the name of Sadducees (or the Just), to whom they were fond of likening themselves. Such, in the days of the Machabees, were the diverse tendencies of the Pharisees and Sadducees; let us see how far they had developed their theories at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Each proceeded along the downward path it had marked out for itself. The Pontiff kings and the chiefs of the sacerdotal body fortified themselves in their holdings, endeavouring, in the administration of public business, to conserve their tottering forces by intrigue and shrewdly-planned alliances; while, with the neighbouring nations, they maintained their reciprocal relations with more rigour in proportion as the independence of Judea began to be more generally menaced. From this habitual intercourse with the pagan world the faith of the Sadducees grew weaker, and the epicurean doctrines, which so largely obtained at Rome, attained an influence over them also. If they really retained their belief in the Creator, God, they did not concede to Him any active participation in the government of the world. "The Law once given to the people," they said, "Jehovah withdrew into the repose of Eternity, and abandoned man to his own free-will, unchecked and unheeded." Very soon they came to deny the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the existence of the angels. Priests of Jehovah, for the most part, they still continued to observe the laws, and acquitted themselves of their sacred functions; but, even so, they railed against the scrupulosity of the zealots.

"The Pharisees," they would say ironically, "torment themselves to no purpose in this life of ours, since they will gain nothing for their pains in this world or any other."

The laxity of this aristocracy, full of disdain for the people and of friendly toleration for the Gentiles, had been at all times a scandal to the Pharisees, who therefore showed themselves the more ardent to protect the orthodoxy which was thus threatened. According to the rabbinical expression, they multiplied "hedge after hedge" about the Law, and would have had their prescriptions as strictly obligatory upon all as were the precepts of the Lord. To lend some show of reason to their pretensions, they asserted that there was no commandment of which Moses had not given an oral interpretation. To collect these traditions and from them to construct a complement to the entire Mosaical ordinance, became their aim. Colleges of learned doctors were formed to enter into the minutiae of these rules, and the people who, since the captivity, had

ceased to understand the original Hebrew of the Holy Books, received these decisions as the words of God himself. The instruction which they received from the Pharisee-scribes is, therefore, at this epoch all the religion that Israel retained; to discover what that doctrine was, it suffices simply to open the Talmud.

No speculative theology, no considerations concerning the Divine Being, or the soul, or the end of man, or the things of eternity; only ardent discussions as to puerile observances; scrupulosity as to what was lawful pushed to the last extreme of absurdity, while but faintly and infrequently does some inspired sentence recall the God of Horeb and Sinai. Past all doubt the Pharisees guarded the Law of their God most faithfully; yet, in that Law, the exact payment of tithes, interminable ablutions, and especially the observance of the Sabbath, absorbed all their attention. It would be useless to enumerate the one thousand two hundred and seventy-nine rules which a Jew must have always before his eyes, if he would not violate the "quiescence of sanctity" — the precepts ordained for the conduct of guests at public banquets, the innumerable contaminations to which all were declared to be exposed.

Such a yoke as this was intolerable; the Sadducees threw it off openly, the scribes resigned themselves to enduring it, merely for the sake of appearances; but, for the most part, under their religious exterior, they concealed nothing but bigotry and hypocrisy. The Talmudic writers have torn the mask from the true features of the Pharisaism of their times; nothing could be imagined more mind-deadening and wretched in its effects than the rules observed by these zealots, in order to regulate their comportment and to overawe the masses. And so we see them, presently, in order to give an added gravity to their carriage, shortening their steps so that their feet might always meet in their mincing gait. Again, that they might never look upon a woman, some kept their eyes so obstinately fixed upon the ground as often to result in sudden collisions with the walls, while others, preserving a still more exact modesty, enveloped their heads in sacks and walked the streets like blind men.

If disposed to believe that these are but satirical exaggerations, that this picture overdoes the reality, you need only turn over a few pages of the Talmud to discover how far hypocrisy was elaborated into a practical science. Read the ten chapters devoted to the "Eroubin," that is, the expedients to which it was permissible to resort in evading the Law, in the event of its becoming too inconvenient. For example, the "Sabbatic rest" forbade the transporting of any load or burden further than two thousand cubits. In order to double this measure, it was enough to have deposited some food, the night before, at the furthest point in the legal distance. By this act a presumptive domicile was conferred from which it was allowed to proceed again for another two thousand cubits in any direction. Should the Pharisee perceive that one of his animals was about to die, he was permitted to kill the creature without violating the holy Sabbath rest, providing he swallowed a morsel, of the size of an olive, taken from the beast's carcass, thus indicating that he had been obliged to butcher it for nourishment. It was allowable for him to buy and sell also; the only precaution he

must observe was not to pay until the morrow. We would not venture to add to this list the licentious excesses tolerated by the rabbis, merely on condition that they were concealed under an impenetrable mask of secrecy.

Is it necessary to mention the fact that, however widespread among the masses was this decadence, there were many noble exceptions still to be found in Israel, many scribes who were worthy descendants of the Assideäns, true heirs of their faith and virtues. The Gospels speak the praises of more than one, the Talmud names still others, and, among the first of all, stands Hillel. His poverty, borne with such dignified serenity, his steadfast unswerving constancy, his zeal, his charity, have rendered him justly celebrated. It was he, indeed, who instructed the contemporaries of Jesus in maxims almost Christian in spirit:

"Love and strive after peace."

"Love mankind and reconcile it to the Law."

"He who magnifies his own worth debases it."

"What am I, if I neglect my soul? If I have no care for it, who will take care of it for me? If I do not think of these things now, when shall I do so?"

Dazzled by his epigrammatical brilliancy, many have unreasonably exalted this rabbi by attempting to make him an historical peer of the Christ. They forget that Hillel never accomplished anything which can be compared to the works of the Saviour. Like the other doctors of his day, while commentating upon the Pharisaic laws, he confined his efforts to making that yoke bearable, and spoke only in the schools of Jerusalem to a small group of chosen disciples. Indeed he even shared in the disdain of the scribes for the poor and humble; this haughty saying comes from him: "No man without education can escape evil-doing; no man of the common people has ever attained unto piety." In a word, Hillel was an illustrious scribe, Jesus is God. Between such there is no comparison possible.

And finally, we have still to speak of the strangest of all the Jewish sects — the Essenes. On the western borders of the Dead Sea, where the streams of Engedi empty into the lake, a verdant oasis gladdens the eye, wearied with those desert stretches of land, devastated by the fire of divine retribution. In its green recesses there lived (quoting the words of Pliny) "an eternal people, where there was never any one born." No woman, no child, was ever found among them; youths only were admitted, and only after long probation. The Essene, on the day of his reception, received the white garment in which he was robed at all the repasts of the community, the towel-cloth needed for his numerous ablutions, and an instrument which served as axe and spade, and designed for cutting and digging trenches and sewers, in which all refuse was buried with the greatest care, lest by any uncleanness they should sully the purity of the sun's rays. A rigorous discipline was imposed upon all; absolute obedience, perpetual abstinence and mortification were obligatory; their only punishment was excommunication, by which the condemned man was constrained to live upon herbs, and thus die slowly of hunger.

What were the hopes, what were the fanatic dreams which could sustain the Essene in his rude life? It is hard indeed to tell, for a terrible law sealed their

lips and on the rack of torture they refused to expose their mysteries. All that any one knows today is that they worshipped the sun; that they believed, like the Pythagoreans, in an ethereal soul, which is, for a time, confined within the body. Their aversion to the sacrifices of the Temple, and for the flesh of animals, their linen vestments, their prohibition of speech, all remind one of the Orphics whom Plato knew. Yet what was, in reality, the teaching of this sect? No one can say with any certainty, for it was not long-lived, and it kept its secret to the end inviolate. However, it matters little or nothing so far as it affects the history of Jewish religions since the doctrine of these ascetics was never popular; being confined to the initiated, it had but a feeble influence upon the general populace of Israel.

If we wish to understand the feelings and thoughts of these average Jews, we must look to the writings of that period. So, listen to this paragraph, found in the Book of Enoch: "In those days there shall be a wondrous change for the elect. The light of day shall shine for them without shadow and without night; all majesty, all honour shall attend upon them. In those days the earth shall render up every treasure which she possesses; the kingdom of Death also, Hell itself, and all that has been intrusted into them. . . The elect shall build their dwelling within a land of delights; a new Temple shall be erected for the Great King, more spacious, more resplendent than the first, and all the flocks of the earth shall be led thither unto sacrifice." "In that place," pursues the author of these Messianic dreams, "I see a never-failing fountain of justice, whence flow innumerable streams of wisdom on every side, and all those who have thirst shall come hither and drink. . . From over that new earth the ancient heavens shall fade away, to give place unto another heaven, wherein the stars shall give forth sevenfold more light than before; and thenceforth the innumerable days shall succeed each other in an happiness that shall know no end."

Their Sybilline oracles have added to this description, so flattering to the senses, further promises of a felicity more terrestrial still. "The people of the Mighty God shall bathe in seas of gold and of silver, their garments shall be of purple; all lands and oceans shall pour their treasures at their feet, and the saints shall reign amid unceasing delights. The tiger shall graze side by side with the kid; the olive tree shall be crowned with imperishable fruits; milk, whiter than the snow, shall spring up from the fountains, and the young child shall play with the asp and the serpent without fear." It would be easy to multiply quotations. The Fourth Book of Esdras, the Psalms of Solomon, the Jewish writers of Alexandria, bear witness everywhere to the same longings; everywhere we find these dreams of a people aspiring to a higher destiny, to a fuller fruition, yet looking for it only amid the things of earth and from temporal pleasures.

All, indeed, as we have pointed out, did not partake of these material sentiments. In this degenerate people, in the midst of this carnal Israel, the spiritual Israel was still alive, a chosen band, predestined to be of the Kingdom of the Christ; holy souls who, by piously pondering the inspired truths, had therein discovered the proper lineaments of the picture which prophecy had painted of the true Messiah.

In the very hour of man's fall God had declared to Adam that One should be born of the seed of the woman; and thereafter He set apart, from the race of Sem, one people, of the stock of Abraham, and from that people one tribe — the tribe of Juda [1] — from which was to be born the Messiah.

That mysterious Figure stands forth still more clearly, more perspicuously, as the years hasten on toward the realising of all expectation of Him. As Moses sees Him, He is a Prophet, his equal in power; in David's eyes He is a king, his son, heir to his glories, as well as his misfortunes.[2] His very Name is discovered to the Psalmists; this King of all times to come and of the timeless Eternity is to be called the Anointed of God, the Christ, the Messiah.[3] One after another the Prophets added each a line to the limning of this portraiture which foreshadowed the advent of Divinity, Bethlehem is to be His birthplace, Galilee His native land, a virgin his Mother.[4] He will preach the good news to the pure and humble of heart. He will enter Sion mounted upon the foal of an ass.[5] He shall be despised and rejected, led to the slaughter as a lamb; His vestments shall be parted, lots shall be cast for His tunic, His hands and His feet pierced; vinegar shall moisten his lips.[6] Yet shall He become subject to the malefactor's death only that He may show forth the glory of His resurrection; His soul snatched from the deep pit, and His body from corruption, that He may seat himself upon the right hand of Jehovah, henceforth to reign forever in the world of human hearts.[7]

Prophecy has been advanced to this point of certainty when Malachy appeared, the last of the seers. It was he who finished the painting, by his foretelling of the precursor of Jesus. This herald of the Messiah would arise from among the children of Levi; so then the Prophet fixes his gaze upon that tribe. If he scourges the vices of the priesthood, their scandalous alliances with the daughters of Gentiles; if he proclaims a new Sacrifice, offered from the rising unto the setting of the sun,[8] and casts aside as worthless the defiled oblations of Israel, it is to prefigure the Forerunner, as he was to separate himself from the Levites, going forth before the face of the Messiah, preparing the way for Him: "Presently shall He come to His Temple, the Saviour whom you seek, and the Angel of the Testament whom you desire. Behold, He cometh, sayeth the Lord of Hosts." [9]

Such was the Messiah for Whom all true Israelites waited in expectation; such the Precursor, to be sent before Him, and of whose birth Saint Luke will give us the account.

1 Gen. iii. 15; ix. 26; xii. 3; xlix. 8.
2 Deut. xviii. 18; 2 Kings vii. 13; 3 Kings xi. 34; Psal., passim.
3 Ps. xliv. 8.
4 Mich. v. 2; Is. ix. 1–7; vii. 14; lxi. 1.
5 Zach. ix. 9; Is. liii. 3, 7.
6 Ps. xxi. 19; xxi. 17; lxviii. 22.
7 Is. xi. 10; Ps. xv. 10; cix. 1.
8 Mal. ii. 1–11; i. 10–12.
9 Id. iii. 1.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF THE PRECURSOR

I. The Vision of Zachary

Luke i. 5–25

For four centuries the world had waited for the fulfilment of these prophecies. The reign of Herod had almost reached its end; and the old king, beginning at last to realise that he was descending slowly, surely to the tomb, stands out a lonely figure in the palace which his bloodstained hands had made so bare and empty. Uneasy forebodings disturbed the souls of men. Suddenly from Jerusalem, and from the Temple, a voice broke the silence of suspense in words that spoke deliverance and salvation.

Among the many Levites of that time, there was a priest named Zachary, of the family of Abia, the eighth of the divisions [1] which, by turns, took part in the divine service. Reduced as they were upon the return from captivity, the sons of Levi were not slow to increase in number; and thus they were soon forced to seek residences outside of Jerusalem, in the ancient sacerdotal cities. Hebron and Youttah had seen their levitical population returning to the old homes, and it was probably the latter of these towns which was the dwelling-place of Zachary. Situated to the south of Hebron, and at some considerable distance from it, Youttah stretches along the slope of a hill, in the heart of the mountains of Juda. In this retreat Zachary lived with his wife Elizabeth, who was also of the sacerdotal tribe. The sequestered pair "were just in the sight of God, and walked without reproach in the commandments and laws of the Lord." [2] Yet they found their piety put to a severe test; for, childless while they were both far advanced in age, they had finally lost all hope of God's ever blessing them by raising up offspring to the barren daughter of Levi.

The time drew round for Zachary to join his associates of the class of Abia, and to fulfil his functions in the Temple; he therefore took his way to Jerusalem. Each class was accustomed to decide the division of the various offices by lot; that of incense-burner fell to the husband of Elizabeth.[3] It was the highest of all the sacerdotal duties, and was performed with a solemnity of ritual which it behoves us to describe more in detail.

The altar of gold, whereon was offered the sacrifice of perfumes, stood in the midst of the Holy Place, between the seven-branched candlestick and the table of the Bread of Proposition; only a single veil separated it from the Holy of Holies, despoiled in Zachary's time of its Ark of the Covenant. Everything about the sanctuary must be made ready beforehand — the flames of the lamps trimmed and brightened, the ashes removed from the altar, and a fresh fire enkindled upon it before the entrance of the priest. Upon his appearance all stood aside, and the people, crowding back beneath the porches, prayed there in si-

1 Luke i. 5; Par. xxiv. 2–19. 2 Luke i. 6. 3 Luke i. 9.

lence. The officiating minister alone advanced within the Holy Place, and, at a signal given by a prince of the priesthood, must cast the precious perfumes upon the flame; then, having bowed down before the Holy of Holies, he receded slowly, stepping backwards, that he might not turn his face away from the altar. A bell gave warning of his withdrawal and the benediction which he bestowed upon the people.[4] Immediately Levites intoned the sacred hymns, and the music of the Temple, combining with their voices, formed a symphony so powerful (the rabbinical writers say) that it could be heard in Jericho.

Although this ceremonial was observed twice every day — in the morning and at evening — the Jews never assisted thereat without a secret tremor of anxiety; for the priest, who entered within the sanctuary, was their representative, and the incense burned beneath his hands was for a figure of the prayers of all. Should Jehovah reject his offering, if He should strike him to the earth for some legal impurity, then indeed would Israel be overwhelmed by the same blow. It was from this cause the impatience of the crowd arose and the promptitude with which the minister acquitted himself of his functions, that he might not prolong the general emotion.

But on this day these fears were quickened to terror; for Zachary tarried much longer than the wonted time in the Holy Place.[5] He appeared at last, trembling, dumb; his lips so suddenly sealed, his gesticulations, his agitation, all declared that some portentous spectacle had burst upon his sight. Did he write down his marvellous vision at once? The sacred text would not seem to imply as much. "He remained dumb," [6] it says; as if it would signify that his heart, as well as his tongue, refused to reveal immediately the celestial apparition, or that he would await that hour for disclosing it in which God Himself would open his lips. This, then, is what Zachary at last made known.

He was about to enter within when, to the right of the altar from which arose white clouds of incense, of a sudden an angel appeared. Seeing this, terror overwhelmed the priest; but the angel spoke to him: [7]

"Fear not at all, Zachary! Your prayer is heard; your wife Elizabeth shall conceive a son, and you shall give him the name of John. This child shall be your joy and your delight, and the multitude shall rejoice at his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord; he shall not drink of wine nor of aught that doth inebriate, and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. He shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God; and he himself shall walk before Him in the spirit and might of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children,[8] the unbelieving unto the wisdom of the righteous, and prepare for the Lord a perfect people."

Malachy, whose prediction the angel here recalls, had foretold that two forerunners should herald the Messiah's appearance: one, John the Baptist, was to announce His first advent; [9] Elias, the other envoy of Heaven, in the latter days of the world, shall descend from his chariot of fire to prepare men for the return of the Christ.[10] Yet in spite of the diversity of their missions, John was

4 Num. vi. 24–26.
5 Luke i. 21.
6 Luke i. 22.
7 Luke i. 11–17.
8 Malach. iv. 6.
9 Malach. iii. 1.
10 Malach. iv. 5.

to be another Elias, because in him would be enkindled the very soul of the Thesbite — the same strong spirit, the same glowing genius — a fiery nature which should lead captive the sons of Israel by word and example, and bring them back to the virtues of their fathers. Engrossed in the contemplation of so perfect a resemblance, the Jews had never, in their thoughts of them, separated these two forerunners of the Messiah.

God did not demand of Zachary a more illuminated intuition, nor that he should foresee clearly everything that the angel's announcement implied; all that was required of him was that he should believe implicitly in the message, however mysterious it might seem. Too haughty for such simple faith, the Levite still demurred; he dared to demand a sign before he would yield any credence to the divine communication.

"How shall I know the truth of these words?" he answered. "I am old, and my wife is advanced in age."

To overcome and dissipate this incredulity, the angel deigned to disclose his own dignity.

"I am Gabriel," he said, "one of the ministering spirits, standing ever in the presence of God, whom the Lord has sent to speak to you and to announce to you these good tidings. Look you, therefore, you shall be dumb and shall not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall take place, because you have not believed my words, which shall be accomplished in their time."

Zachary must needs have humbled himself under the hand which chastised him. He retreated from the sanctuary dumb; only by his signs of awe and terror could he respond to the breathless throng, now quite disquieted by his long delay, and at once all the people knew that he had seen a vision in the Temple.

The days of his ministry being fulfilled, he betook himself to his home. A little later Elizabeth, his wife, conceived, and for five months secluded herself "because," as she said, "the Lord hath dealt thus with me, since He has willed to take away my reproach among men." [11] Nothing could be more natural than this desire to retreat from the world. It was but seemly, indeed, to prevent the curiosity and malice of rumour from busying itself with such a marvel as was this unhoped-for conception.

II. The Circumcision of John the Baptist

Luke i. 57–80

"The time being come for Elizabeth to be delivered,[12] she brought forth a son; and her neighbours and kinsfolk being made aware that God had manifested His mercy towards her, shared in her joy, and on the eighth day they all gathered unto the circumcision of the infant."

This consecration to the God of Abraham was celebrated in every family with solemn festivity. Ten witnesses surrounded the child; while the father,

11 Luke i. 25. 12 Luke i. 57–59.

or some other of the relatives present, made with an instrument of stone the bloody incision. Zachary did not perform the sacred rite in person, for his moveless lips could not pronounce the benedictions incidental to it. So also, when at the close of the ceremony they desired, according to ancient custom, to confer a name upon the child,[13] and would have called him Zachary after the father, the latter neither heard nor comprehended.

Elizabeth, however, withstood them. "No," she said; "he shall be called John."

"But," it was objected, "none of your kindred bear that name."

She persisted none the less in her design. Turning toward the father, who stood before them a mute and wistful spectator of this scene, she asked him by signs what name he wished to give the child.

Zachary, taking up his tablets, wrote thereon, "John is his name."

Then, while they were still filled with astonishment, suddenly the lips of the old man were opened, his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aloud in thanksgiving to the Lord. At this prodigy their wondering delight gave place to fear and awe. From that dwelling, endeared to God, the thrill of emotion spread swiftly throughout the surrounding country; so that shortly, among the mountains of Juda, nothing else was spoken of beside these marvels; and those who heard the tale treasured it up in thoughtful silence, musing in their breasts, "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?" For the hand of God was upon him.

With his hearing and speech Zachary recovered the divine favour, and, filled with the Spirit, he prophesied. As sung every night in our churches, the hymn of the holy old man is like an echo of the ancient prophecies of Israel. Jehovah visits His people to save them from their enemies — from the hand of those who hate them; the Redemption is revealed unto the eyes of this Levite, even as the dying Moses beheld it,[14] and as Ezechiel [15] and countless others had represented it — mighty and resistless as the horned frontal of the savage beast which spreads terror round about its path. Yet, beneath this rude imagery — the last vestiges of an almost vanished era — there is a tenderer tone which predominates withal. The salvation of Israel is no longer that which the carnal-minded Jews had fancied — the triumph of their race, the joys and riches of this world. It is salvation in righteousness and holiness, won by penitence and the remission of sins. The God of Zachary is no longer a Jehovah who, as He moves among men, sows horror and death about Him, but a God with bowels of merciful compassion, shining upon the world like a holy, beneficent light. It is as if, very different from the mornings of earth, this marvellous Orient, this great New Dawn, would be made visible, not on the horizon, but on high, within the heavens, thus to make it manifest to the world that He came, not to consume it with the scorching heats of noontide, but to spread about His pathway the pure light of a clear, cloudless daybreak. Hence, though Jewish in its form, this chant is essentially Christian. Struck with its beauty in the original Aramean, Saint Luke sought to reproduce, not only the thoughts, but the figures as well,

13 Luke i. 59-63. 14 Deut. xxxiii. 17. 15 Ezech. xxix. 21.

foreign as they are to the genius of the Greek tongue. To this fact is due the obscurity and, at the same time, the peculiar charm of this Hymn:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
because He hath looked down upon His people,
and hath wrought their Redemption;
He hath raised up, in the house of David His Son,
an invincible power (as it were an Horn),
to be our Salvation:
(according to that which He hath promised us,
by the mouth of the holy Prophets,
from the beginning of Time;)
a Salvation whereby He will preserve us
from our enemies,
out of the hands of them that hate us:
for the accomplishment of His Loving
Kindness
unto our fathers;
and as a remembrance of His holy Covenant,
the oath which He swore to Abraham
our father;
so that, delivered from the hands of our enemies,
and freed from fear, we may worship Him,
in righteousness and holiness in His sight,
even all the days of our life.
And thou, child, shalt be called
the Prophet of the Most High.
Thou shalt walk before the Lord,
to prepare His ways,
to declare unto His people Salvation,
in the pardon of their sins,
pardon through the bowels of mercy
of our God:
whereby a Star, rising to the heights of heaven,
hath visited us:
illumining them that sit in the shade
and in the darkness of death,
leading our steps within the paths of peace.

The halo which overhung the cradle of John might not last in all its early splendour; for the design of God, was, in silence and in solitude, to form of him the greatest of the children of men. The glorified dwelling place of Zachary disappears immediately from our range of vision. All that we know is that God's Spirit came upon the Baptist even in his childhood and impelled him to retire to the desert. "The child grew," says Saint Luke,[16] "and his soul was strengthened, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation in Israel."

16 Luke i. 80.

CHAPTER III

THE INCARNATION

I. The Annunciation

Luke i. 26–38; John i. 1–18

Six months after the conception of John,[1] Gabriel received of God a new mission. This time it was neither to the Temple nor to the holy city that he must needs betake himself, but to Nazareth — an obscure village of Galilee. He was sent thither to a young kinswoman of Elizabeth, named Mary, who was betrothed to a descendant of the house of David called Joseph. Sprung likewise from the seed of the Great King, she was, according to the testimony of tradition, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, and had but one sister, named, like herself, Mary. Her parents, being deprived of male offspring, had been forced in order to insure the legal transmission of their property,[2] to affiance the two sisters to two young men of the same lineage.

We do not know what combination of circumstances had banished these descendants of the kings of Israel from Bethlehem, the home of their family; yet we must believe that, sharing in the destinies of their race, they had all fallen into poverty and obscurity; for neither their ancestry nor the prophecies which promised the throne to a Son of David awoke the morbid suspicions of Herod. The lives of the betrothed pair in the retired village of Nazareth were passed in complete separation from each other, and in a state bordering upon destitution. Joseph was a carpenter; Mary worked, as he did, with her hands. Thus, then, it was an humble dwelling-place, this cottage of Joachim and Anna, which the angel from Heaven visited; for, in accordance with the custom of the daughters of Juda, Mary was expected to seclude herself in the privacy of her home from the day on which her troth was plighted.

But it was not merely for these few days that Mary had hoped to shelter her virginity within that lowly retirement. A light, which never before shone upon the mothers of Israel, had discovered to her the value of perpetual continence and she was resolved never to know man. How was she to reconcile this inspiration from Heaven with the promise made for her by her parents? It was a period of perplexity and an agonising ordeal, this to which Mary was subjected from the time of her betrothal, and it was destined to cause her an even more profound trouble on the day of the angelical message.

A little to the westward of Nazareth there is a fountain which bears the name of Mary. The Greeks have erected close at hand their Church of the Annunciation. They hold that the angel uttered his salutation to the Virgin on that spot, when at evening she had set out from the village on her way thither to draw water. This legend, taken from the Proto-gospel of Saint James, is not based upon any reliable foundation, and Christian art is more truly inspired

1 Luke i. 26. 2 Numb. xxxvi. 8.

when it represents the Virgin as kneeling in the privacy of her chamber at the hour in which the angel appeared to her.

Doubtless by those same vows of chastity she had hastened the day of the coming of the Messiah, when the celestial messenger appeared before her eyes [3] and said: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you; you are blessed among all women."

Yet, having heard this, she was troubled at his saying, and she thought within herself what could be the meaning of such a salutation. But the angel resumed:

"Fear not at all, Mary; you have found grace in God's sight. And behold you shall conceive in your womb and shall bear a Son, and you shall give Him the name of Jesus. He shall be great, and He shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of David His father: He shall reign eternally in the house of Jacob, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary had meditated much upon the prophecies; she could not therefore mistake the purport of the angel's announcements. This child, Son of the Most High, King and Saviour of men for all eternity — this could only be the Messiah; and to her was to accrue the honour of bringing forth the Desired of Days. But the daughter of David had resolved to remain a virgin for God's sake, and despite this promise that she should be the Mother of a God she continued steadfast in her inspired design.

Unable to make the angel's words harmonise with this vow, "How may this be," she replied,[4] "since I know not man?"

Gabriel immediately enlightened her. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you," he said, "and the power of the Most High shall enfold you within His shadow; therefore it is that the Holy One which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. And behold your cousin Elizabeth also has conceived a son in her old age; and it is now the sixth month for her who is called barren, because nothing is impossible unto God."

This was sufficient to insure Mary's entire abandonment to the Will of the Almighty. She bowed down before the seraphic messenger: "I am the handmaid of the Lord," she said; "let it be done unto me according to Thy word." And forthwith the angel withdrew from her sight.

What happened then in the little house of Nazareth?

In one line John has expressed the unspeakable thought: "The Word was made flesh, and took up Its habitation with us." [5] The Word — that is to say, the Eternal and substantial utterance of God, His own, and only Son: "A Son who was not born at the commandment of His father, but Who, by puissance and by plenitude, flashed forth from His Bosom, God of God, Light of Light." [6]

Of the Word we can learn little enough from the first three Evangelists; so intent are they upon tracing the footsteps upon earth of the God made Man that

3 Luke i. 28–33.
4 Luke i. 34–38.
5 John i. 14.
6 St. Basil, Hom. xxv.

they speak of His Divine nature but rarely; yet this is not at all the case with John. The beloved disciple of Jesus had drawn from the heart of His Master a relish and a perception of the highest mysteries. So when, following Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he took up his pen to write "that which his eyes had seen, his ears heard, that which his hands had touched of the Word of life," [7] stifled in the thick atmosphere of the lower world of thought, he spurns the air with strong eagle-pinions, and rising far aloft above the earth and the heavens, he penetrates to the throne of Him Whose life he would recount. From those fearful heights his first word rang forth like a peal of thunder upon the ears of the Christians of Ephesus, who knelt in prayer and fasting round about him.

"In the beginning was the Word,

"And the Word was with God,

"And the Word was God;

"He it is Who was with God in the beginning.

"All things have been made by Him, and without Him is nothing made that has been made.

"In Him was the life, and the life was the Light of men.

"And the Word was made flesh," adds Saint John; that is to say, has formed unto Himself a body out of the most pure blood of Mary — the Eternal Father has produced, in the bosom of the Virgin, that same Son whom He has, from all eternity, begotten within His own bosom. In that all-happy moment, this blood, this virginal body found itself pervaded and absorbed by God: "The Word was made flesh, that the flesh might become God." [8]

And this union was not to be transitory; for the purpose of the Word is to consummate His union with man, "to dwell amongst us," "to pitch His tent in our midst," which is the force of the words used in the original text. This last word of the Evangelist carries an allusion to the luminous cloud which had enveloped the Tabernacle long ago to show that Jehovah sojourned in the midst of His people. In the time of Jesus, the sanctuary of Herod was empty of its Ark of the Covenant, nor did its curtain of glory any longer screen the holy receptacle. John shows how the Word did take up its abode in the midst of Israel, of a truth. "He has pitched His tent in our midst," he says, "and we have seen His glory," not blazing by brilliant intervals, as did that of the ancient Cloud, but streaming upon the world in rays of splendour, which are the effulgence of grace and truth — grace, by which we mean the Life divine that animates our souls; truth, by which we mean the Light of God that illuminates them.

"We have all received of this fulness," he pursues; [9] "a grace more abounding has succeeded the ancient gifts of Jehovah to the Jews." "Moses did but give us the Law, we have gained grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Moses had never beheld Jehovah save through the splendrous mists of Sinai — for never has any one seen God; He, the one and only Son (the only-begotten God, according to another reading), He who, in the Bosom of God, exists in His very Presence — He alone can declare to us, of Himself, what He is."

7 1 John i. 1. 8 S. Ambrose. 9 1 John i. 16-18.

Such, in the eyes of Saint John, was the salvation which the Son of Mary came to accomplish. The Truth must, then, at its Incarnation, illumine the eyes long blinded to the light; grace must flow in cleansing streams there where sin has soiled the very springs of our natural life; and the Word, embodied in our flesh, must repair the ruined handiwork of the Creative Word, of the Word Which was in the beginning.

II. The Visitation

Luke i. 39–56

In those days Mary, rising up, went in haste toward the mountainous country, to the city of Youttah. What prompted her to undertake so long a journey? — one so unusual, too, when we recall how strict was the seclusion which custom had imposed upon a young Jewess after her betrothal? [10] Are we to believe that Joseph, having had knowledge of Mary's state, rejected her, and that she sought consolation in the society of Elizabeth, as well as escape from the hard-heartedness of men; or, better still, was she not led by a longing to unburden her heart, which was now overbrimming with its new gladness, and so sought the company of a soul capable of understanding her? Elizabeth shared with her in these bountiful blessings of the Lord; thus she had been designated by the angel as Mary's natural confidant. Was there not in all this an adequate motive for the Virgin's disregard of those rigorous Jewish customs?

It took only a few days for Mary to go from Nazareth to Youttah. She traversed Judea, screening herself beneath the veil of a humility already perfect — indeed, so forgetful was she of the eminence to which she had been elevated over all Creation, that she gladly humbled herself thus, in order to discourse with her kinswoman of the divine honours vouchsafed to them. Wherefore, so soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's salutation within her dwelling, the child leaped within her, and revealed to her the presence of the Incarnate God.[11]

"You are blessed from among all women," she cried out, "and the fruit of your womb is blessed. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of My Lord should come unto me?"

This knowledge of the secrets of Heaven, Elizabeth owed to the Precursor, who was aroused within the maternal bosom, that so he might salute Jesus; this is what she declared, adding —

"So soon as the voice of your salutation came to my ears, the child that I bear leaped to my breast." Then, reflecting upon the incredulity and chastisement of her husband, which set the serene faith of Mary in so much higher relief —

"Blessed," she cried, "is she who hath believed that the word which the Lord hath spoken to her shall be accomplished."

Amid these transports of surprise and joy Mary remained calm and collected; her lips opened at last, but it was to praise God for this new largess of His bounty toward her, for His providence toward the world, for His merciful goodness to all Israel; these three ideas sustain the burden of the whole Magnificat.[12]

10 Philo. 6. 11 Luke i. 40–45. 12 Luke i. 40–55.

My soul doth glorify the Lord,
and my spirit is made exceeding glad in
God my Saviour.
Because He hath regarded the lowliness of
His handmaid:
and behold all generations
shall proclaim me Blessed.
For the All Powerful hath done great things
to me:
And Holy is His Name;
and His mercy reacheth from age to age, unto
those who fear him."

Turning from the marvellous effects of the Eternal Holiness, the Love Eternal, in her regard, Mary's glance sweeps over the world; it seems to her flashing vision as lying prostrate at the feet of that Almighty One whom she knew she was soon to bring forth unto it.

"He hath showed forth the Might of His arm.
He hath scattered those who were proudly
elated
in the thoughts of their hearts.
He casteth the powerful headlong from their
thrones,
and hath lifted up the humble.
He hath filled the hungry with food,
and sent away the rich with empty hands."

This great upheaval in human destinies must result in the triumph of the veritable Israel, and in this thought the sacred Canticle finds its final note of joy.

"He hath taken under His protection
Israel, his servant,
Being mindful of His mercies to Abraham
and to His people, from generation to
generation."

Nor need we marvel at the sight of Mary pouring forth her feeling under this poetic form. In the East, where song is the natural expression of every emotion, only a few thoughts are requisite to the development of a poem. Inspired simply by the remembrance of the hymns of Israel, and by the grace of which she was the spotless vessel, the Virgin, uplifted upon the wings of the Divine Spirit, drew from her enraptured soul the measure of this canticle, as simple as it is sublime.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATIVITY

I. The Appearance of the Angel to Joseph. — The Census of Quirinius

Matt. i. 18–25; Luke ii. 1–15

After nearly three months passed in her cousin's home, Mary returned to Nazareth.[1] That she was soon to be a mother was, of course, at once made known, and Joseph was made acquainted with the bitterest of all human sorrows.[2] He could not hesitate as to the duty of repudiating this affianced maiden, whom honour would not permit him to retain; yet, as "he was just," and knew the severity of the Law towards the sinning woman, he resolved to spare Mary. The betrothment, considered among Jews as sacred as the marriage tie, like it could be broken by divorce; but although the act of separation was public in its nature, yet, in certain cases, usage allowed of its being drawn up in secret. Joseph chose this plan, which was at the same time in accordance with his duty and his grief.

But while he was sadly pondering this step the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said to him,[3] "Joseph son of David, be not afraid to take unto you Mary, your espoused; for that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bring forth a Son, and you shall give to Him the name of Jesus [4] (which means a Saviour); He it is Who shall save His people from their sins." "This," adds Saint Matthew, "was done to accomplish what the Lord had said by the mouth of the Prophet": [5] "Behold a Virgin shall conceive in her womb, and shall bring forth a Son, and He shall be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us."

When Joseph had arisen from his sleep, he had no other thought beyond the desire to fulfil the command of the angel. He was eager to repair the unmerited outrage Mary had suffered in his thoughts. Nuptial ceremonies at once ushered the young spouse into his house, but "he knew her not," pursues the sacred text, "until the day wherein she brought forth a Son and gave to Him the name of Jesus." Not that after His birth Joseph ceased to respect the virginal temple in which Jesus was incarnate. Christian tradition has always shrunk with horror from the thought that Mary, whose taintless blood had mingled with the blood of a God, could ever have forfeited the purity of God's tabernacle, the habitation of His overshadowing cloud, and the Ark of the Lord. Saint Matthew's only thought here was to emphasise the miraculous nature of her maiden motherhood, and to declare the fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction that "a Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son." [6]

Nazareth, which was to be the abode of Jesus for many long years, did not

1 Luke i. 36.
2 Matt. i. 18, 19.
3 Matt. i. 20–23.
4 The name signifies "the Salvation of the Lord."
5 Isaias vii. 14.
6 Matt. i. 23.

witness His birth. The prophecies had reserved that glory for Bethlehem; and the whole world, at the destined hour of His birth, was disturbed, that these predictions might be accomplished. "In those days," says the sacred text,[7] "an enrolment of the empire brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the edict which prescribed it emanating from Augustus." This prince, at that time, held the whole world in his sovereign grasp. The adopted son of Cæsar, he had inherited his projects, and of these the most considerable and wide-reaching in its consequences consisted in a registration of the Roman world. This general taking of statistics was to include a valuation of all the resources of the provinces, and a reapportionment of the tax-list. Interrupted for a while, the work of Cæsar was pushed forward again by Augustus, who besides a description of the various lands, added a recapitulation of their subjects. Twenty commissioners, whose probity had recommended them to the favour of the prince, were despatched into the countries which bore the yoke of obedience to him, and there they devoted twenty-five years to this work. The result was inscribed by the hand of Augustus himself, in a book called by Suetonius, "Statistics of the Empire." "It was," says Tacitus, "a pictorial reflection of the imperial acquisitions; herein one might see how many of the citizens and of the allies were under arms, the number of fleets, kingdoms, provinces, the revenues from tribute and toll gatherers, an estimate of necessary expenditures as well as of perquisites." [8]

In what year did the decretal for this universal census become operative? It is difficult to decide. The three censuses attributed to Augustus upon the bas-relief at Ancyrus seem to refer simply to the regular numbering of the people of Rome, made by the censors once every five years. Apparently Augustus promulgated this edict when, feeling himself to be at last absolute master of the Empire, he forthwith devoted all his energies to its consolidation.

Even the allied kingdoms must needs make this act of submission, and Saint Luke informs us that its performance was brought about in Judea at the time in which Jesus was born. "This first enrolling," he adds, "was made by Quirinius, Governor of Syria"; [9] in other words it was made authoritative by Saturninus, as Tertullian tells us; [10] was continued under his successor Varus; and hence it could not have been consummated until the time when Quirinius first took in hand the government of Syria.

Ten years later this same distinguished ex-consul, having been despatched to Judea to reduce it to the condition of a Roman province, found himself obliged to rectify his earlier efforts, and to make a new census in order definitely to regulate the tribute. From this fact comes the care with which Saint Luke would distinguish between the two enrolments. If the first has left fewer traces among Jewish annals, and caused no such bloody revolts as did the second, it is because it was merely a description of the peoples and their goods, involving neither any levy of taxes nor military service; but most of all is it due to the fact that Herod was still alive, and, by shrewd political address, was able to manipulate the workings of this enforced enrolment. In fact we can see

7 Luke ii. 1, 2.
8 Tacitus, *Annales*, i. 11.
9 Luke ii. 2.
10 Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, iv. 19.

how this Roman census, taken under the eyes of the imperial commissioners, was, notwithstanding, administered according to Jewish forms.

Now the Israelites were in the habit of taking an account of their population, not in their place of residence or birth, but by assembling themselves according to the family and the tribe whence each one had sprung.[11] A muster of Judea, therefore, was nothing less than a revision of the genealogical tables. These precious archives were carefully kept and highly treasured by the particular city which was by way of being regarded as the first fatherland of each family. David was born at Bethlehem; it was to this town, therefore, that Joseph must betake himself, "for he was of the tribe and family" of the Great King.[12]

Two of the Evangelists had held in their hands the genealogical tables of Bethlehem; naturally each searched therein after what would most clearly support his individual point of view. Saint Matthew, occupied in the collection of evidence which would reveal in Jesus, the King and the Messiah promised to Israel, for his part only demanded of these archives an endorsement of Joseph's royal ancestry. Saint Luke, writing for the Gentiles, interests himself solely in the natural filiation, and he shows us in what order of generation the second Adam traces His lineage up to the first man, and thus to God Himself.

One might very well marvel that the sacred historians, who have given us these genealogies of Joseph, should have passed over in silence that of Mary, if it were not so well known that, according to the teaching of tradition, the Virgin was a near relative, probably the niece, of Joseph, and that, in consequence, her paternity corresponded with that of her husband. The family trees of the parents of Jesus being the same, nothing could be more natural for the Evangelists than to set down these pedigrees just as they found them in the records at Bethlehem; for the Jews were prone to overlook the descent of their womenfolk, by giving only that of the men.

II. The Nativity

Luke ii. 4–7

So then, to inscribe himself in the public registers, the carpenter of Nazareth quitted his native hills of Zabulon. His young wife, too, made the journey with him. Everything drew her to Bethlehem; a secret inspiration from Heaven as well as her affection for Joseph. Perhaps, too, there was some obligation for her appearance in person at the enrolling, as being the heiress of her family.

Four days of foot travel separate Nazareth from the city of David. Mary, as her time was so near, made the distance very slowly, for winter makes the roads rough, and the holy family journeyed on foot, doubtless, like other poor pilgrims. Leaving behind them the plain of Esdrelon, En-Gannim, Sichem, and Sion, about two hours from the last-named town they perceived at length the dwellings of Bethlehem.

This village is located upon a long and whitish hill, whose slope, covered with

11 Num. i. 2. 12 Luke ii. 4, 5.

vines, olive and fig trees, forms a circle of terraces, rising one above another in regular curves, like steps in a stairway of verdure. On the summit rests today a heavy pile of sombre buildings; it is the Church of the Nativity, which screens the holy grotto, and round about it are the three convents built by the Latins, the Greeks, and the Armenians. From these heights, at a glance of the eye, we can descry, far below us, the fertile valleys, the ancient domain of Boaz and of Jesse, the far-away pastures, where, protecting their herds from the mountain lions, there had grown up that intrepid race of shepherds which once supplied Israel with the noblest of her captains.

As they entered Bethlehem they would first encounter the hostelry, of which the khan of modern Oriental villages is still a fair copy, a huge square enclosed by porticos; here, under the shelter of some rude galleries, the ground being raised a foot or two above the level, travellers are spreading out their mats upon the narrow platform, while all about them beasts of burden block up the courtyard; such was the aspect of the place before which Joseph and Mary presented themselves.

The concourse of strangers in those busy days of the registration, the poverty of these late comers, the very condition of Mary, all promised the humble pair a cold welcome. So it happened that they received the reply, "that there was no room for them"; [13] and despite their fatigue they must needs seek elsewhere for some resting-place. The chalk-hills of Judea are honeycombed with innumerable caves. One of these excavations, close by the inn, was used as a shelter for such beasts as the public stables were unable to accommodate. Mary, according to the testimony of tradition, could find no other refuge but this. And there, amid the straw which served as bedding for the beasts, far from all assistance, on a cold winter's night, the hour came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth unto the world, Jesus.

The object of assault for nineteen centuries, this humble birth, the adoration of some, to others has seemed but a folly and a libel.

"Preserve me from it all!" cried the impious Marcion, in the very first centuries. "Away with these pitiful swaddling-bands and this manger, unworthy of the God whom I adore."

In vain did Tertullian reply, "Nothing is more worthy of God than that, in order to save man, He should trample under foot our perishable grandeur, and so adjudge these joys unworthy of Himself and His." In vain have all our doctors who have followed him made manifest to us the High Counsel, so full of wisdom and merciful compassion, which moved the Word Incarnate to this Self-abasement; the God that was born of a woman and laid in a manger has offended the haughty spirit of man, and Marcion's cry is repeated still from century to century.

Without going as far as this in their impatient scorn, the Christians of this same era sought to dignify the humility of their God by fanciful prodigies. They would have us believe that the glory, which Jesus rejected, enveloped His cradle; that Mary, upon her entrance into the sombre grotto, filled it with a noontide

13 Luke ii. 7.

radiance; that the angels, in robes of splendour, hung over them in trailing legions; that the stars retarded their heavenly motions to contemplate the birth of God, to shed upon Him their gentle rays; that the manger itself was resplendent with a great lustre, and that all eyes were veiled, unable to sustain the gorgeous glare.

Very different from this is the simple story of the Gospel; here there is no outward pomp; all the glory of the crib lies in its inherent loveliness. It is only the soul that is illumined by it; 'tis to the heart alone it speaks. Furthermore, we must not forget that here, by anything we add to the Majesty of the Christ, we detract just so much from His Love. The Word, in order to save us, has not disdained the womb of a Virgin; why, then, should we blush at the lowliness of our God? The more profound it appears the more it forces us to love Him.

Nevertheless, though Mary knew all the natural cares of motherhood, she was yet unacquainted with all those evils which are the penalty of sin — the sorrows and the heavy-heartedness into which all daughters of Adam must fall. We should not even say that her motherhood was like that of Eve, in the age of innocence; for as she was a greater than Eve so hers was the unparalleled happiness of preserving her virgin purity in bearing the Divine Child. When Jesus was born, it was as when the ripe fruit is parted from the branch that bore it, so cheerful, so comfortable, and attended with all joys was the coming of the Christ Child into the world.

So Saint Luke shows us this Virgin Mother, immediately upon her deliverance, lavishing upon her Holy Infant the cares ordinarily left to strangers; she envelops Him in swaddling bands and lays Him to rest amid the straw of the manger.[14] "She must cloak the New Adam from the cold winter air; reverence, too, bade her clothe the Babe, as well as did necessity. Cover Him, Mary; cover that tender Baby body; shield Him in thy maidenly bosom! Dost understand thy Motherhood? Hast thou not any perturbation at beholding this thine infant One? Hast thou no fear to bare unto Him thy maternal breasts? For what Child is this, Who reaches up to thee His divine hands? Adore Him even whilst thou dost nourish Him, what time the angels summon new hosts of invisible worshippers." [15]

III. The Adoration of the Shepherds

Luke ii. 8–20

To the east of Bethlehem there extend toward the Dead Sea one of the greenest of valleys. In olden times there stood in that place "the Tower of the Herds," near which Jacob had pitched his tent, there to mourn his dearly loved Rachel. Ruth had gleaned in those happy fields, and the boy David tended there his father's flocks. Today, in that same valley, the olive trees overshadow a lonely crypt. Consecrated to the holy angels, this sanctuary

14 Luke ii. 7. 15 Bossuet.

marks the spot over which the heavens were opened to reveal to earth the coming of its Saviour.

"Certain of the shepherds," says Saint Luke, "were guarding their flocks and keeping their watches through the night. Then suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared unto them, the glory of the Lord [16] enveloped them in light, and they were seized with a great terror." For to the sons of Israel no splendour could emanate from the skies, without recalling the flaming heights of Sinai and the dread Jehovah, Whom no man might look upon and live.

Straightway the angel reassured them. "Be not afraid," he said; "I am come to announce good tidings of great joy unto you and unto all your people. Today, in the city of David, is born to you a Saviour, the Christ, the Lord; and behold the sign by which you shall know him: you shall find Him an Infant, wrapt in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

A manger, an infant, to work out their salvation! What strange tidings are these! The wonderful, the mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Messiah, for whose glorious coming Israel was in expectation, has revealed Himself at last in nakedness, in abandonment, in the midst of the straw of a stable! What a sudden reversal of the most dearly cherished dreams of the Jews! They must needs be simple and docile hearts who could receive this message. And so the angel bore the glad tidings, neither to the doctors of the law nor to the great ones of the earth, but to these shepherds; and in them he found that which he was seeking — the faith of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.

Their gentle souls were all aglow upon his words, and suddenly, while their eyes were still drinking in the celestial radiance, all at once they saw that the angel was not alone; a multitude of spirits, all hosts of Heaven, surrounded them,[17] and the angelic choir entoned the chant whose echoes resound each day in the holy mystery of the Mass —

"Glory to God in the highest of the heavens, and peace upon earth unto all men beloved of God!"

The shepherds heard with rapture this concert of the angels; and when it had faded away into the far depths of the skies, and the messengers of God had gone from their sight, "Let us go to Bethlehem," they cried to one another immediately, "and see this which has happened — see this which the Lord has made known to us."

And making haste to depart, they ascended the hill.[18] Upon its heights they found the cave; in the dumb beast's crib lay an Infant, wrapt in swaddling bands and laid amidst the straw; over Him knelt a young Mother, a thoughtful and silent man.

It was the sign given from on high; they recognised it; and their faith bursting forth into joyous transports, they recounted to those who surrounded them all that had been said to them concerning this Child. The sudden arrival of the shepherds, their search throughout the village had attracted attention. Soon the throng of listeners grew in numbers, and "all were in admiration at this tale which the shepherds related." [19]

16 Luke ii. 8–12.
17 Luke ii. 13–15.
18 Luke ii. 16, 17.
19 Luke ii. 18–20.

Having rendered their testimony to the heavenly origin of the Babe, "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had heard and seen, even as He had made known unto them." Midmost of all this concert of delighted homage the Mother of Jesus was silent. "Treasuring up all these things, she pondered over them in her heart," [20] until the day when Saint Luke wrote them down at her inspiration; for it would seem certain that in this portion of his Gospel, which is so entirely different from all the other accounts, we are reading the very words of Mary. This story, at once so simple and so tender, betrays the Virgin's hand and the Mother's heart.

IV. The Circumcision and the Presentation in the Temple

Luke vi. 21–38

What happened after the departure of the shepherds? Were the emotions which their tale had excited lasting? Did the citizens of Bethlehem make all haste to offer Mary that dwelling [21] where the Magi were soon to find her?

The Gospel, while it notes this change of abode, does not tell either at what time or in what manner it was effected; certainly, to worldly eyes, there was nothing of distinction about this poor family of the Saviour; and therefore it is most probable that the attention, so suddenly attracted to them by the shepherds, was as promptly drawn away by the more exciting incidents of the census taking. For, eight days later, when the Babe was to be circumcised, the same Evangelist, who tells us how great was the gathering on the same event happening in the life of John the Baptist, now simply remarks of Jesus: "On the eighth day He was circumcised." [22]

Apparently it was Joseph who performed the sacred rite, and so shed the first drops of the Blood Divine. The Christ, in order to fulfil all justice, was required to endure this humiliation, and bear in His body the stigma of the sins which He had taken upon Himself. Yet He only underwent circumcision that He might set us free from its bondage, by substituting for it a purification more elevated, one wholly spiritual — that of the heart and of the heart's evil desires.

It was the time for giving the Child his Name. The angel had apprised them by a heavenly mandate that He should be called Jesus — a name that spoke of salvation to the Jews, and recalled thoughts of their entrance into the promised land and of the return from Captivity. The sublimest of the titles of the Christ — the Messiah [23] only compasses in its meaning the Majesty of the Son of God — that anointment by which he was consecrated King and Pontiff; the name Jesus signifies One who has loved us even to the dying for us; it bears in upon the heart with a profounder impress of love, a celestial sweetness, a secret relish of salvation, and a foretaste of our deliverance.

20 Luke ii. 19.
21 Matt. ii. 11.
22 Luke ii. 21.
23 ["Messiah," like "Christ," signifies Anointed One.]

The Law commanded that this first-born should be presented in the Temple as it is written: "Every male child that cometh from the mother's womb shall be consecrated to the Lord"; [24] and it was necessary for Mary to be purified, since the Levitical canons declared every woman unclean after the birth of her offspring. During forty days, if it were a son, eighty if a daughter, she was forbidden to approach the sanctuary.[25] The custom among the mothers of Israel was to pass this time secluded in their homes until the day on which the expiatory sacrifice was to purify them. They offered, then, a year-old lamb for a holocaust, and a turtle dove or a young pigeon for a sin-offering. In kind consideration for the poor, the Law permitted them in place of a lamb, which would have been too costly, to make presentation simply of two turtle doves or two young pigeons. Such was the obligation to which the Virgin submitted herself, although she knew nothing of the common misfortunes of women in her stainless generation.

On the fortieth day following the Nativity "the time of their purification was accomplished." [26] The sacred text extends the expiation entailed upon the mother so as to include Jesus also; for since the Law considered everything impure that had been touched by the woman during this period, the child she bore in her arms was excommunicated as much as the mother. So Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem to consecrate Jesus to the Lord; the five shekels [27] of the Sanctuary relieved Him of the obligation to remain as a server at the altars, and the "sacrifice of the poor" was offered for the purification of them both.

"Now there was at this time in Jerusalem a just man, and one who feared God, named Simeon, who lived in expectation of the consolation of Israel. The Holy Ghost was with him, and it had been revealed to him by this Spirit of God that he should not surely die, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord." [28]

The terms of which Saint Luke makes use in speaking of this aged man indicate that he had in mind a distinguished personage, perhaps even the famous scribe Rabban Simeon, son of Hillel. Indeed there is a perfect resemblance in this sketch of his to the historical Simeon — a similarity in age and residence, an equally high-souled zeal, with the same saintliness of life. The Talmud, which expatiates complacently upon the grandparents and sons of Hillel, preserves an expressive silence as to Simeon; and this doubtless because it would gladly bury in oblivion a president of the Sanhedrin who celebrated the birth of Jesus, and who had thoughts anent the Messiah which differed very widely from those of his contemporaries, so widely in fact that the latter finally deposed him from the presidency of the Supreme Council.

At the moment when Mary and Joseph were approaching the Sanctuary that indwelling Spirit, moving within the old man's heart, was conducting him to the Temple.[29] There was nothing in their exterior to draw his gaze upon them — a poor family making their sin-offering, while in the arms of the mother there lay a little Child; and yet it was enough for him. To the eyes of the Seer this Infant appeared, what indeed He was, the long-expected salva-

24 Exod. xiii. 2.
25 Lev. xii.
26 Luke ii. 22.
27 [About three dollars and fifty cents in our money.]
28 Luke ii. 25, 26.
29 Luke ii. 27, 28.

tion, the consolation which he had waited for so long, the one and only object of his vows. Simeon took Him into his arms, and in an ecstasy of the Divine Spirit he intoned this Canticle:

"Now hath it come to pass, O Lord,
that Thou dost deliver [30] Thy servant:
according to Thy word,
he will go in peace.
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation:
that salvation which Thou hast prepared
in the face of all the nations:
Even as a Light, which shall reveal itself
unto the Gentiles
and the Glory of Israel, Thy people."

Meanwhile "the father and the mother of the Child were filled with wonder at the things which he had spoken of Him, and Simeon blessed Him"; [31] but as his eyes fell upon Mary, he perceived in prophetic vision all that this Mother was to suffer. Then, holding up the Babe before her —

"He Whom you now look upon," he said, "is for the ruin and the resurrection of many in Israel. He shall be a Man rejected and denied. As for you, a sword of sorrow shall pierce your soul."

Then, reverting to the Son of Mary and to the trials that awaited Him, he revealed what would ensue: "And thus," he added, "the thoughts which many hide in their hearts shall be revealed"; that is to say, in the presence of the Christ — He who was to be for the scandal and the scorn of this world — before Him all secret thoughts should be unveiled. He would distinguish in this way between those who dreamed of riches, glory, and temporal happiness as part of the coming of the Messiah, and those who, seeking Him for Himself, are prepared to welcome Him under whatever form he may appear.

Mary listened in silence to this menacing prediction. Such as she appears to us now in the Temple, such she ever remains throughout the whole Gospel — enveloped in her modesty, her heart at times flooded with joys which no language can express, but oftener resigned under the sword which even now tore this Mother's heart in expectation of the end.

"There was present also a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser,[32] of a very advanced age. She had lived seven years with her husband since her virginity, and she had remained a widow up to her eighty-fourth year, never leaving the Temple, and serving God night and day in fasting and prayer." It was this zeal for the House of God which merited for her that she should find therein, and therein adore, her Saviour. As she was coming into the Temple at that same moment, she recognised the Child whom Simeon had blessed, rendered thanks to Heaven for unveiling to her eyes this Mystery, and praising the Lord her God, she spoke of Him to all those who awaited the redemption of Israel.

The Lord, the God praised by the prophetess, is manifestly Jesus; to Anna, daughter of Phanuel, belongs, then, the signal honour of having first announced

30 Luke ii. 29–33. 31 Luke ii. 34, 35. 32 Luke ii. 36.

to Jerusalem the Divinity of the Christ, which other most illustrious witnesses were soon to publish to the world.

CHAPTER V

THE EPIPHANY

I. The Magi

Matt. ii. 1–11

While Joseph and Mary were leaving Jerusalem, a rich caravan was entering it. "These were certain Magi of the Orient," says Saint Matthew. This word, borrowed from the religious terminology of the Persians, is used here to designate the sacerdotal class; and it would seem to indicate, therefore, that the Magi were priests of that nation. This feeling is confirmed by the paintings in the catacombs, where we see the Magi always robed in the costume of the Persians — the high headdress, the tunic girded at the loins, over which floats a mantle thrown back over the shoulders, the legs either bare or covered with boots, closely bound with thongs after the fashion of this people.

Ministers of a religion far superior to any of the numerous forms of paganism, the Magi appear to have worshipped at all times One Supreme Divinity, toward whom they observed an austere cult. There were neither altars nor statues in their temples; their choirs never marched with other than reverent gravity, sending up to God their solemn chants and prayers.

These noble beliefs had survived intact among the Persians up to the time when, under the guidance of Cyrus, they ascended into the plains of Mesopotamia. There mingling with the Chaldean Magi, if they did not preserve the purity of their faith, they however came under the potent influence which the Israelite captives exercised upon their conquerors at that period, and in particular under the teachings of Daniel. It is a fact, which we know from Scripture, that this prophet, after his introduction into the palace of Nabuchodonosor, showed himself ten times as wise as the priests and soothsayers of Chaldea,[1] and hence he was placed at their head through the favour of the prince. His ascendency only increased under the four succeeding princes and the three dynasties, and was afterwards confirmed by the triumph of the Persians; for these new victors sympathised with the hatred which Israel had ever felt for idolatry.

Being made subject in this manner to the authority of Daniel, the Magi — Chaldean as well as Persian — could not possibly have been ignorant of his predictions concerning a Messiah, in which he had gone so far as to mark the year, the month, and the hour of His Birth. They had learned from him that the Saint of Saints, who should receive the divine anointment, was that very One whom Balaam had beheld rising from Jacob like a star.[2] From the Magi these

1 Dan. v. 11. 2 Num. xxiv. 17.

prophecies were disseminated among the people; and in the time of Jesus there was a settled conviction, cherished likewise throughout all the East, that a King was to arise from Judea, who should conquer the world.

In the midst of this expectancy a strange star shone out suddenly in the eastern sky. The Magi always followed the course of the stars attentively; in the clear nights of the Orient, when the heavens hang out all their glittering lamps, they had remarked this star, and recognised it as a signal for some great marvel. And at the same time their hearts as well as their eyes were opened to admit the light which heralded the Christ; they recalled to each other the star of Jacob and of Judea, and three from among them resolved to travel afar in search of Him of whose approach the heavens were telling.

Whether they set out from Babylon, from Persepolis, or from some other city of the Parthian Empire (at that time master of the East), the Magi must have been many long months journeying; and they had proceeded apparently without any further guidance from the star since we see them entering Judea quite uncertain as to the spot where the Messiah was to be found, and coming to Jerusalem to clear up all their doubts. The Holy City was accustomed to seeing within her walls caravans from the far distant Orient, with their striking costumes, and long files of camels laden with luggage. But great was the surprise when these strangers were heard to inquire, "Where is the King of the Jews who has been born? We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him." [3]

This question, flying from lip to lip, came to the ears of Herod. No one could be more disturbed by it than he, conscious that his unhoped-for good fortune and his thirty years' reign had not been able to sanctify his pretensions to royalty in his subjects' eyes. In vain had he espoused the daughter of the last kings of Judea, in order to make them forget his origin; none the less did the blood of Ishmael and of Esau flow in his veins; and the scribes loved to recall that he had been "the servant of the Asmoneäns." Powerless to appease this bitter hatred, the usurper could know no repose; and in his dread of any rivalry, he shed the blood of his family in torrents. No remnant of the race of the Machabees being left alive, he had hoped, at last, to reign without further strife, when the rumour bruited abroad reached his ears — that certain strangers were seeking in Jerusalem for a newborn King of the Jews. At once the tyrant's jealousy was aroused to a savager intensity than ever. So it was no longer the extinguished race of the Machabees, but that of David, which now threatened him; for this unknown Babe, destined to the throne, could be none other than the Messiah; and it was easy to see from the excitement which pervaded the city that all Jerusalem was reading the occurrence in that light.

Dissembling his fears, in order to strike a better directed blow,[4] Herod convened a council composed of high priests and scribes, and ordered them to declare where the Messiah should be born. The answer could not be misunderstood.

"In Bethlehem of Judea," they said; "for it is written, 'And thou, Bethlehem, land of Juda, thou art not the last among the principalities of Juda, for from thee shall spring the chief Who shall feed the flock of Israel, My people.' "

3 Matt. ii. 2. 4 Matt. ii. 4–6.

These members of the Sanhedrin did not so much quote the words of the prophet Micheas as they interpreted his thought; but Herod saw only too clearly what he had wished to know, and his plans were at once settled.

He resolved to separate the Magi, not only from the Jews, who must naturally be all afire with emotion at this tale, but even from his own associates, who might well have warned them against his hypocrisy. He summoned them to him therefore in secret, and feigning great interest in their quest he made exact inquiry as to the star, particularly as to the time when it had made its appearance.[5]

So soon as there was nothing more to learn, "Go to Bethlehem," he said to them; "seek zealously for the child, and as soon as you have found him make it known to me, in order that I may go also to adore him."

And he despatched them on the instant, without guides, without escort, thus giving no time for any warning, in order that no one, either at Jerusalem or at Bethlehem or among the retinue of the Magi, might suspect his intentions and rob him of his victim. Night had fallen upon the city; Herod saw in all this the very moment adapted to his designs. It was but to result in their confusion.

Scarcely had the Magi passed beneath the gates of Jerusalem, when the star shone out anew upon their gaze.[6] "This sight filled them with great joy"; for the star, leading them on their way, preceded them to Bethlehem, and rested above the place where they were to find the Babe.

There they found only Mary and Jesus. Whereupon that holy night witnessed a wondrous spectacle; at the feet of a Virgin, clasping within her arms a young Child, these three sages fell prostrate in the dust, and adored the Godhead enshrined within this poor abode. Round about them, their attendants were eagerly bestirring themselves on all sides; the camels too had bent their knees, while the retainers lightened them of their precious burdens. Then the Magi, opening these treasures, made offering of them to Jesus. These were gold, incense, and myrrh.

Such is the scene in the Gospel. Pious legends there are, which add more details than one. They robe these wise men in the royal purple, set crowns upon their brows, depict their features and their expression; their names even are made known to us.

"The first was called Melchior," says the Venerable Bede. "He was an old man, with white hair and long beard; he offered gold to the Lord, as to his King. The second, Gaspar by name, young, beardless, ruddy of hue, offered to Jesus, in his gift of incense, the homage due to His Divinity. The third, of black complexion, with heavy beard, was called Baltasar. The myrrh he held within his hand prefigured the death of the Son of man."

Unhappily, these details have no authority at all; for it is only in the sixth century that Saint Cæsar of Arles confers upon the Magi the title of Kings, now so generally attributed to them, and it is in the ninth that we find their names cited for the first time. Two points only appear to be certain; these are, that the Magi were three in number and that Persia was their native country.

5 Matt. ii. 7, 8. 6 Matt. ii. 9-11.

II. The Flight into Egypt and the Holy Innocents

Matt. ii. 12–23

This their pious duty being discharged, the Magi were relieved from the fulfilment of their promise to Herod; for God, Who had been leading them thus far, would still take care for their return. Being warned in dreams not to appear again before the king, they returned to their own country by another road.

As soon as the Magi had departed, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph while sleeping.

"Arise," he said to him; "take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt. There you will dwell until such time as I shall declare to you, for Herod is searching for the Child to destroy Him."

It was still night; Joseph, rising up, took the Child and His Mother, and set forth.

Egypt has ever been the refuge for those unfortunates whom persecution and famine have driven forth from the land of Israel. From the mountains of Juda it only takes a journey of three days to reach Rhinocolura. Beyond that valley, with its narrow watercourses, Herod had not further power; it was Egypt. To all fugitives it offered safety and an assured asylum; and for this reason the Jews of the Dispersion had once spread their colonies throughout all the land of Mizraïm, the ancient abode of their fathers.

The Gospel tells us nothing concerning this flight of Jesus; doubtless this is because nothing occurred worthy of remark. The long stretches of the desert alone witnessed the passage of the Holy Family; some unknown dwelling sheltered them; while there was nothing of any note about them to betray their own unparalleled distinction. The design of God in sinking these early days in the shadow was thereby to throw out in higher relief the future splendour of the Divine Life, and not to dazzle the gaze by such wonders as are found only in the apocryphal Gospels.

All in vain have the great painters of Italy immortalised these legends; the dragons of the desert couchant before their Lord; the lions and tigers bounding forward to adore Him; beneath His feet the sand grows green and flowering as the Field of the Roses of Jericho; while the palm trees bow down their fronded crests, disclosing their fruits to the fugitives. All these lovely pictures are but reveries born of a fanciful devotion.

Certain local traditions merit perhaps more consideration. To the east of Cairo a sycamore is venerated as having once overshadowed the Holy Family; and near by there bubbles up a stream whose waters (or so say the Copts) were sweetened beneath the touch of Jesus. This legend points out Heliopolis, the ancient On, as the abode of the Saviour in Egypt; but they cannot tell us what possible reason Joseph could have had for conducting the Mother and the Child so far away, when he might have found a secure shelter on the frontier. Indeed the time of their exile was so short that it was probably here, on the border, that the fugitives remained.

The precipitate departure of the Magi upset all Herod's plans. The morbid jealousy of the tyrant, little used to finding himself thwarted, vented itself in savage fury. Lacking any precise information, but only recalling what the Magi had said about the time of the star's appearance, he concluded from this that the young King must be yet unweaned; and as it is the custom with Jewish mothers to nurse their babies for two years, he ordered a slaughter of all the children of that age and under in Bethlehem and the outlying territory.

This cruel order was executed at once, with a brutality which wrought most horrid anguish in those mothers' breasts; for Saint Matthew tells us of the shrill screams reechoing round about the mountains. Rachel herself awakes from the tomb, where she sleeps at the foot of Bethlehem,[7] to mingle her mournful cries with those of the afflicted women. Then was accomplished that which had been foretold by the prophet Jeremy — "A voice has been heard upon the heights, great weeping and an unceasing wail of lamentation: Rachel mourning her children, and she will not be comforted, because they are not." [8]

Certainly, if we take these words in their literal sense, it was over the Jews made captive under Nabuzardan and collected at Rama to go together into exile — it was over these wretched ones that Judea laments with the voice of Rachel, the beloved spouse of Jacob; but, most reasonably, Saint Matthew sees in this passage a portent of the tears which should be shed over the Holy Innocents. Indeed, nothing had ever occurred to the Israelites which had not some secret reference to the Messiah; sufferings and joys, humiliations and triumphs, each after their own manner, were for a figure of that which should be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. The bereavement celebrated by Jeremy was thus in reality a prophecy of the moanings and wails which would rise over the first fruits of our martyrs.

This massacre made little stir in Judea; and Rama alone hearkened to the piercing shrieks of the mothers. In those days what mattered the sacrifice of a few little children to a monarch's caprice? Antiquity had small respect for babyhood, furthermore, the reign, now just at its close, had been nothing but a tissue of murders, tortures, and atrocious cruelties; so that, according to the address of the Jewish ambassadors to Augustus, "the living coveted the lot of the victims." [9] Under such circumstances one can conceive how easily profane historians might pass over a deed so unimportant in their eyes.

Nevertheless, Augustus seems to have had some knowledge of the fact, for Macrobius has preserved this characteristic speech of his: "Upon the news that Herod had sacrificed his own son, among the children of two years of age butchered by him in Syria, 'It were far pleasanter,' quoth the Emperor, 'to be Herod's sow than his son.'" This imperial pun supposes a confusion as to the facts — quite natural on the part of Augustus, who must have learned of this massacre as coincident with the news of the murder of Antipater, who had been the fomenter of a new revolt against his father. It could not have been invented later on, in the Christian centuries; for then the immolation of these first martyrs had attained an unparalled importance in all minds. At all events, this

7 Gen. xxxv. 19. 8 Jerem. xxxi. 15. 9 Josephus.

sally of Augustus is not simply a valuable witness of the fact as recounted by Saint Matthew, but it even enables us to fix the date also, since it was but five days before his death that Herod delivered his son into the hands of the executioner.

Not that God had delayed his visitation of the tyrant until this moment. A horrid disease, which Heaven seems to reserve for persecutors, had been corroding and consuming his body, little by little. Our pen would refuse to copy the picture drawn by Josephus; it is enough to say that the corruption of the tomb devoured him during life itself. A prey to insupportable agonies, he sought some relief in the warm baths of Callirhoë; but he was forced to return to his superb palace, overshadowed by the palm-trees of Jericho, and there stretch himself upon a bed of torture. Vexatious tidings found their way thither to irritate his frenzied spirit. A rumour of his death had reached Jerusalem, and a golden eagle, placed by him over the gate of the Temple, had been torn down. The culprits were two famous scribes, Judas and Mathias. After being dragged to Jericho with forty of their disciples, they were burned alive; but their death only added to Herod's hideous terrors. Succumbing at last to the extremity of his sufferings, he attempted to shorten their duration, and thereafter recovered consciousness only long enough to order that horrible execution of his son. His last thought was worthy of such a life; he was determined that tears should be shed at his funeral, and, knowing it was impossible to expect those of affection, he collected into the Hippodrome of Jericho the chiefs of the great Jewish families, that he might have them butchered at the hour of his death. The order was not executed; but it is well to recall it just here, as it enables us to comprehend how the massacre of the Holy Innocents would be passed over almost unnoticed in the midst of the torrents of blood which the tyrant spilled in the delirium of his last days.

Herod's end was so impatiently awaited that the news must have been carried, far and wide, in a short space; but the angel of the Lord anticipated its arrival in Egypt.

He appeared to Joseph during his sleep, and said to him:[10] "Arise, take the Child and the Mother, and return to the land of Israel, for they are dead who sought the life of the Child."

Joseph rose up immediately, and set out toward Judea. Saint Matthew, always intent upon setting forth the accomplishment of the prophecies in Jesus, upon this event refers to that line from Osee:[11] "I have called My Son out of Egypt," whose terms apply both to the exodus of Israel and to the return of the Child Jesus. It was a habit with the Jewish people to consider their very existence and their history as the outlines of the coming Messiah; and this made the connection very striking for the first readers of this Gospel.

Joseph's intention was to settle in Bethlehem; his thoughts often recurred thither; and, more than all else, was it not expedient that the Child, Who was destined to rule over the world, should dwell near to Jerusalem and His Temple? But on the road the Holy Family learned that Archelaus reigned in the place of his father. Judea had only changed the person of her tyrant; for, as

10 Matt. ii. 19-21. 11 Matt. ii. 15; Osee xi. 1.

his first essay in infamy, the son of Herod had already put to the sword, within the Temple walls, three thousand of his subjects. Joseph dared not expose the treasure confided to him to such perils. He lifted his eyes heavenwards, and Heaven made answer, in a dream, that he should retire into Galilee. At his death Herod had bequeathed this province to another of his sons, Herod Antipas. Under this ruler, of a corrupt but careless character, the Divine Child would incur fewer dangers; for this reason Joseph returned to dwell in Nazareth; [12] and thus was fulfilled what had been said by the Prophets — "that Jesus should be called a Nazarene." [13]

This was not so much any particular prediction (as Saint Matthew refers to it), as it was a thought often uttered by the prophets; the Messiah was to be "The Netzer," that is to say, the Flower, that shall crown the rod of Jesse. On its side, Nazareth took its name from the same stem, in allusion to the beauty of its site — for "it was the flower of Galilee." We do not know how this word, which from its origin could evoke none but the sweetest reminiscences, in the end lost all loveliness in their eyes; indeed, for the Jews, "the Nazarene" was unmistakably a term of contempt, and apparently it was in order to upraise it to a new dignity that Saint Matthew recalls how Jesus once dwelt in Nazareth, was hailed by its name, and was thus the Flower of Israel.

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AT NAZARETH

I. The Childhood of Jesus

Luke ii. 40

All that we know of the childhood of Jesus is comprised in those words of Saint Luke: "The Child grew, and waxed strong in the fulness of wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." There was therefore a transitional period in the life of Jesus — a period of growth in body, which grew like that of other children — a period of progress, even "of a soul, which fortified itself," according to another reading of the sacred text.[1]

How are we to understand this interior development of Jesus? The common feeling is that His wisdom and His power declared itself by degrees, although He possessed them in their plenitude even from His conception; and hence this increase in strength was only an apparent progress. However, we should not forget that the Saviour willed not only to appear, but to be in reality, a Child; now, it is the law of childhood that, just as the organs, at first imperfect, develop little by little, so the intelligence awakes in perfect concord with it. Since Jesus was once a child, did He too submit Himself to the gentle influences of age and its changeful growth? Yet, if we admit this point, how are we to reconcile that absolute omniscience possessed by the Man God in virtue of the

12 Luke ii. 39. 13 Matt. ii. 23. 1 Luke ii. 40.

hypostatic union, with any intellectual increase, however small we may consider it to have been, even were it no more than an experimental knowledge, as many theologians define it? Here there is, we must confess, an inexplicable problem; and it were wiser by far to humble our minds before it, than to insist stubbornly upon a satisfactory solution. We believe, with firm faith, that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is God even as is the Father, and by this He is always infinitely wise, infinitely mighty; on the other hand, we read in the Gospel that Jesus was really a child, and that He grew, in age, in grace, in wisdom. No one of these truths involves a contradiction; certainly we do not know how they were reconciled in Him; and yet, if it were otherwise, the Incarnation would cease to be — what God has willed that it should forever be — a mystery, which escapes the grasp of our reason without shocking or contradicting it.

However it may have been with the interior life of Jesus, outwardly at least there was nothing to distinguish Him from the children among whom He lived, and in Mary's arms He appears to us as Bossuet has painted Him: "Thou lovely Babe! Happy were they who gazed upon Thee, stretching forth Thy arms from out the swaddling bands, lifting up little fingers to caress Thy holy Mother; now, upheld by her firm hands, adventuring Thy first short steps; now practising Thy baby tongue with stammerings of the praise of God, Thy Father! I worship Thee, dear Child, at every stage of Thy divine growth, the while Thou art nursed at her pure breasts, or while, with feeble wails of infancy, Thou dost call for her, or while Thou dost repose upon her bosom, clasped in her warm arms."

The mysterious tide of this divine childhood passed away in the obscure village in which Joseph and Mary dwelt. We know already the name of their retreat; it will suffice to describe its site, to make it understood why Jesus loved Nazareth, and preferred it to any other abode.

Judea is scarcely more than a succession of hill ranges running from the north to the south, at some distance from the Mediterranean. In the west they slope down to the seashore; in the east they are broken suddenly, to leave a passage through which the Jordan flows, hemmed in by their steep walls and that of the mountains of Hauran. Thus four parallel lines of hills make up the whole of Palestine; the plains along the seaboard, the highlands of Juda, the bed of the Jordan, and, beyond that, the hills of Perea. Only one valley, that of Esdralon, breaking through it transversely, cuts the first chain into two parts: one of these stretches north to the Libanus — this is Galilee; the other extends south as far as the desert — that is the land of Juda.

Nazareth belongs to Galilee, and nestles down along the mountainside, shielded from the plain of Esdralon, by the many hilltops which are crossed by those winding footpaths and steep, hilly roads. On the confines of the village these crests stand apart for a space (as it were), so to encircle with their wooded heights a grassy vale. Some scholars have presumed that this verdant amphitheatre was once the crater of an extinct volcano, and indeed the fertility of the spot supports their conjecture. In fact, Palestine has no more smiling glade than this little valley of Nazareth. Antoninus the Martyr compares it to a

paradise. "Its women are of an incomparable grace," he says, "and their beauty which surpasses that of all the maidens of Juda, is a gift from Mary. As for its wines, its honey, its oil and its fruits, it yields not the palm even to fruitful Egypt." Today Nazareth has lost these glories; but it still has its meadows, its shady hollows, watered by cool springs, its gardens of nopal and fig trees, where the olive mingles with orange and pomegranate trees, in fruit and in flower. To the southwest, the village spreads down the slope of the mountain, and the campanile of the Latin convent marks the location of the abode of Jesus.

Nazareth has no other horizon beside this circle of wooded eminences, which shut it in on every side, but from the brow of the hillside on which the village is built Jesus could in one glance embrace all that territory which He had come to conquer; to the north, the mountain peaks of Libanus and Hermon, covered with eternal snows; to the east, Mount Tabor, like a dome of verdure, then the deep riverbed of the Jordan, and the high tablelands of Galahad; from its southern side, the plain of Esdralon reached from His feet as far as the mountains of Manassah; on the east was the sea, and Carmel, with its many reminders of Elias.

Galilee of the Gentiles, as its name indicates, did not form a little world by itself, like the land of Juda. Its inhabitants were of various races. Phœnicians peopled the frontier of Tyre and of Sidon; mingling with the Jews were Arabs and Assyrians, who together cultivated the fields of that province; a few Greek colonies occupied the towns of the Decapolis; and, over all, the garrisons of Rome held the whole country in their grasp.

Amid these surroundings the early years of Jesus were passed. Outwardly the same as other children, He received from Mary and from Joseph the simple lessons which the Law prescribed; at His Mother's knee he learned to read the Scriptures, which only spoke of Him; but Mary knew What He was, and though charged with the duty of instructing Him, she never forgot that He must be the object of her adoration.

II. Jesus Among the Doctors

Luke ii. 41–50

Along about His twelfth year, the young Jew found Himself, in a certain measure, exempt from the family government. Having entered the synagogue, He had begun already to bind about His brows the phylacteries — long bands of parchment covered with sacred texts — and was become "a Son of the Law," and so subject to its prescriptions. One of paramount importance was to visit Jerusalem at the feast of the Pasch. The parents of Jesus acquitted themselves of their duty faithfully; and although custom did not insist upon the presence of the women, Mary accompanied her spouse. The Saviour was twelve years old when, for the first time doubtless, He made the journey to Jerusalem with His family.[2]

2 Luke ii. 42.

The pilgrims from Galilee, because they feared the violence of the Samaritans, usually were loath to cross over their country. It may be believed that the hatred of the sectaries was not so active at this moment; for the traditions declare that, both going and coming, the Holy Family followed the direct road, which passes close by Sichem. By this route Nazareth is distant from Jerusalem some thirty-two leagues, and the trip would take a slow-travelling caravan not less than three or four days. To the south of the valley of Esdralon, the springs and groves of En-Gannim afford a first camping spot for the pilgrims. From thence, after crossing the hill country of Manassah, on the second evening, the tents are pitched near Jacob's Well, at the foot of Mounts Ebal and Garizim. Beëroth with its fountains was the customary stopping place for the third day. After this there remained only some three hours travel, and hence, the next morning would find them within the walls of Jerusalem.

In that city the Holy Family passed the seven days of the Passover. And on the day following the caravans were gathered together for their departure; that of Galilee, which was composed of many thousands of persons, was never ready for the start until near midday; for tradition points out Beëroth as the spot where, at nightfall, Joseph and Mary were first made aware of the absence of Jesus.

One is at a loss to understand, upon first thought, how they were so slow to take alarm; but it must be remembered that Jerusalem, during the Passover season, was thronged with two or three million pilgrims, and in consequence caravans were formed amidst the greatest confusion. It was only when the long files of travellers with camels and mules had left the city gates far behind them, that it became possible to collect together one's own party, and to keep some order. Kindred and friends were then united, the women and the old people mounted upon beasts of burden, the men on foot, leading the way, while, as they journeyed along, they chanted their sacred hymns. The parents of Jesus not seeing Him, would think that He had joined some other band, and thus they would pursue their way, expecting Him to rejoin them when the caravan came to a halt at eventide.[3]

But their search for Him then among the crowd was a vain one: Jesus was not to be found; and their anxiety was very great, for Judea was then in an uproar of sedition. The exile of Archelaus, recently deposed by Augustus, had resulted in the reduction of his kingdom into a Roman province and the imposition of additional taxes. At this new badge of servitude the people revolted, and the excitement raised by the insurrections of Sadoc and Judas the Gaulonite was still agitating them. In such troublous times, amid the wild crews which were scouring over the country, what perils might not menace a lost child!

Joseph and Mary returned immediately to Jerusalem.[4] For the space of two nights and two days, all along the wayside and through the Holy City, they continued the fruitless search. Only upon the third day did they discover the Child, "seated in the Temple, in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and ask-

[3] Luke ii. 44. [4] Luke ii. 45–47.

ing them questions, the while all those who heard Him were astonished at His discretion and at His answers."

How came it that Jesus should be found in this place and in such noble company? The Jewish doctors were accustomed to meet upon Sabbath days in one of the lofty halls of the Temple, and would there solve any difficulties occurring in the interpretation of the Law. In the time of the Pasch particularly, when Jews from all over the world flocked to Jerusalem, there were great throngs about these far famed masters, eager to be instructed by them. The Divine Child mingled among their auditors; those questions of His, so profound in their simplicity, attracted the attention of the doctors, who were soon surrounding Him, eager to question and to hear Him. And such was the charm of His discourse that it held these sages of Israel fast captives to His voice.

This congregation was not unworthy to hearken to Him, for it was made illustrious by men of most venerable authority; Hillel, revered as the peer of Moses, habited still in all the majesty of a noble old age; the unyielding Shammaï, who bound all that Hillel loosed; Jonathas, son of Uziel, whose speech was so fiery that the birds (says the Talmud), as they passed above his head, were either burned, or were transformed into seraphim. Grouped about these, the parents of Jesus might have seen Rabban Simeon as well — he who had foretold to Mary her future griefs; probably there, too, were Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, whom grace was shortly to allure. But even more than the aspect of this company did the part played by their Son overwhelm them with amazement. He in Whom, thus far, they had seen only a thoughtful recollected Child, sedulous to conceal the Divinity inherent in Him — He now discloses Himself suddenly as a superior Being, overawing by His questions and replies these old men of consummate learning.

Still the marvellous character of this scene could not make Mary quite forget all that she had been made to suffer, and her tremulous heart overflowed in this tender reproach:

"My Son, why treat us thus? Your father and I have sought You sorrowing."

Jesus was content to recall to Mary's mind that His only Father was in the heavens.

"Why did you seek me?" He said: "Did you not know that indeed I must be about My Father's business?" [5]

But even this reply — the first sentence from the Saviour's lips which has come down to us — this His word neither Joseph nor Mary comprehended. The humble Virgin herself makes the avowal by that line in Saint Luke's narrative: [6] "And His parents did not understand what He had said to them?"

All she could do, then, was to engrave upon her memory everything she saw and heard that day. As for Jesus, He invested Himself again in the same serene silence as of old, and now the veil which had covered His Childhood once more screens from the view the eighteen years which are to follow.

[5] Luke ii. 48, 49. [6] Luke ii. 50.

III. The Hidden Life of Jesus at Nazareth

Luke ii. 51–52

"Jesus went down to Nazareth with His parents; there He was subject to them, and He increased in wisdom, in age, and in grace before God and before man." Saint Luke here reiterates of the youth of the Saviour what he had formerly said of His childhood. He grew in accordance with the laws of that humanity wherewith He had clothed Himself, and this external life had nothing to the outward view but what was natural and ordinary: only it was an irreproachable life and an unpretentious one. Those who saw Jesus in the days of His hidden life, beheld before their eyes only a poor labourer toiling in his workshop.

Joseph was a carpenter; Jesus was one like him. His countrymen recognised Him as such when He preached in the synagogue of Nazareth.

"Is not this fellow, here, the carpenter, Mary's son?" [7] they cried out.

It was a custom among the Jews for every child, whatever his rank or fortune might be, to learn some mechanical art. It was then doubly necessary for Jesus to work with His hands, for the Holy Family was poor, and their only means of livelihood were drawn from this handicraft of Joseph.

Everything leads us to suppose that the latter died during the hidden life of the Saviour; indeed his name appears no more in the Gospel, neither at the bridal banquet in Cana, nor at the departure for Capharnaum,[8] nor amid any of those other circumstances in which the relations of the Christ are mentioned. Besides this, would Jesus have left Mary to Saint John if her husband had been still alive? [9] Joseph died in Nazareth, therefore, in the arms of Mary, and with the kiss of peace upon his lips from the Lord Himself. Jesus was left alone to be the support of His Mother; and so He busied Himself in that carpenter's workshop at Nazareth, handling the saw and the plane. In its infancy, the Church was wont to recall, for the reverent remembrance of the faithful, those ploughs and yokes which His divine hands once fashioned from the rough wood.

It may be that Jesus did not always dwell alone in that quiet home. According to a tradition mentioned by Eusebius, a sister of the holy Virgin, like her called Mary,[10] had married a brother of Joseph, named Alpheus or Cleophas. He too must have died during Jesus' sojourn in Nazareth, for the Gospel observes the same silence concerning him that it does as to Joseph. But for the two sisters, it would seem that they kept together; and the numerous children of Mary, wife of Cleophas, are those brothers and sisters of Jesus of whom the townspeople spoke in these terms: "Are not His brethren named James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude? and are not His sisters all here amongst us?" [11] It is the usage in sacred Scripture, and is, in fact, a general custom in the Greek language,[12] to call even distant kinsfolk brethren. That term, therefore, only

7 Mark vi. 3.
8 John ii. 1, 11, 12.
9 Mark vi. 8; Matt. xiii. 55.
10 John xix. 25.
11 Mark vi. 3.
12 Gen. xiii. 8, xiv. 14; Lev. xxv. 48; Job xix. 13.

refers to these four cousins of Jesus. As for the daughters of Mary and Alpheus, who lived in the household of the Saviour, we know neither their names nor their number. However these words: "Are they not all here among us?" leave it to be supposed that there were at least three.

Two of their brothers are better known; we shall encounter them shortly among the Apostles. James, son of Alpheus, is that "brother of the Lord" whom Saint Paul wanted to see, together with Peter, and whom he hailed as one of the pillars of the Church.[13] His sturdy virtue got for him the surname of The Just. "Consecrated to God from the womb of his mother, he drank nor wine, nor strong liquor, and abstained from animal food. Never had the razor been passed over his locks, never did he use fine oil to anoint his limbs." [14] Jude, the brother of James,[15] had not, like him, this austerity of the Nazarite; but it was as a tribute to his generosity that he was given the name of Lebbeus (Thaddeus), "the man of heart," [16] by which he is distinguished in the Gospel.

These characteristics were not, however, unfolded until later on, beneath the breath of the Holy Spirit. At Nazareth the kindred of the Saviour had no higher thoughts than such as were common to their contemporaries; all their desires limited to the enjoyment of the good things of this earth. At the outset of the ministry of Jesus, they understood so little what was His divine Mission that they set out upon a day to bring Him back by force to their home, and to constrain Him to take some nourishment. "He is becoming mad," [17] they said. Used as they were to see in Jesus one of their own household, the cousins of the Saviour were apparently the last to believe in Him; and if, seeing the marvels worked by their "Brother," they did finally follow Him, it was in the hope of finding the wealth and honours they coveted.

The following fact related by Saint John hardly leaves any doubt about this point.

It was just as the feast of the Tabernacles was drawing near, in the last year of Jesus; He had not more than six months to live. His brethren came to Him:

"Come out from Galilee," [18] they cried, "and go into Judea, so that your disciples may see the works which you do; for no man does such things in secret when he wishes to show himself publicly. Since you are doing these things manifest yourself to the world."

"Even His brethren," adds Saint John, sadly, "did not believe in Him." And still it was in their society that Jesus of Nazareth lived. These labourers, more engrossed in earthly cravings than careful for the things of Heaven, shared in His tasks, gathered around the same family table, sat by the same fireside, were witnesses of His days and nights. And thus, Jesus, by partaking of them, has hallowed those daily trials of our daily life, which Heaven mingles with the joys of home and family, and which make for the probation and salvation of so many souls.

13 Matt. x. 3; Gal. i. 19, ii. 9.
14 Hegesippus.
15 Luke vi. 16.
16 Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18.
17 Mark iii. 20, 21.
18 John vii. 2–5.

BOOK SECOND

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

The Testimony of the Holy Trinity

And Jesus being baptised, forthwith came out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened, and He saw THE SPIRIT OF GOD descending as a Dove and coming upon Him. And behold a VOICE from Heaven, saying: "This is My beloved SON, in Whom I am well pleased!" (Saint Matthew iii. 16, 17.)

CHAPTER I

THE EPOCH AND THE LOCALITIES IN WHICH JESUS EXERCISED HIS MINISTRY

Luke iii. 1, 2

"In the year fifteen of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judea, and Herod Tetrarch of Galilee, Philip, his brother, ruling over Iturea and the land of Trachonitis, and Lysanias over the country about Abila, under the Pontificate of Annas and of Caïphas, the word of God was spoken to John, son of Zachary, in the desert." Saint Luke, in using these terms to announce the mission of John the Baptist, has not thought so much of giving us, in this summary of the times, an accurate chronology, as he desires to recall the various circumstances surrounding the appearance of the Precursor of Jesus; nevertheless, he is not so wanting in precision but that we can infer from his words the very year in which the Saviour commenced His ministry. Indeed, the public life of Jesus was begun by His baptism; and as this baptism followed close upon the first preaching of John the Baptist, it must have been in about the fifteenth year of Tiberius that the Saviour leaving Nazareth, descended to the banks of the river Jordan.

But what are we to understand by the fifteenth year of Tiberius? As Augustus died the nineteenth of August, in the year 767 of Rome (14 A.D. of our calendar), would it not seem, at first sight, that this year must be from 781 to 782 (28 to 29 of the Christian era), and that consequently the birth of Jesus took place, at the latest, in 751, since He was "about thirty years old" [1] at the time of His baptism? However, this date cannot be adopted; for we know from incontrovertible testimony, on the one hand, that Herod died in the month of April, 750, and, on the other, that the Nativity of Jesus preceded that event.[2] The fifteenth year of Tiberius must then be computed by reckoning, not from the death of Augustus, but from the year in which Tiberius took active part in the government of the Empire. This way of calculating the reign of their

1 Luke iii. 23. 2 Matt. ii. 1.

emperors was the common custom in the provinces of the East. Wieseler has demonstrated this fact by the aid of inscriptions and medals.

Adopting this hypothesis, Jesus was born toward the end of the year 749, some months before the death of Herod and He began His ministry about 780 (27 of the common era).

One other date, which is preserved by Saint John, supports these conclusions. Some months after His baptism we find Jesus in Jerusalem for the Passover. Moved to wrath at sight of the hucksters in the Temple, He whipped them from their stalls with blows from a thong.

The Jews demanded at once, "What warrant have you to show us for such actions as these?" [3]

"Overturn this Temple," said Jesus, "and in three days I will rebuild it once more!"

"What?" they replied, "this Temple was forty-six years in building, and will you raise it up again in three days?"

The restoration of the Temple which is referred to here was commenced by Herod in the eighteenth year of his reign (734). The Passover during which these words were spoken is therefore that of 780. Now, the date of this Pasch being also that in which Jesus began His ministry, His birth, which took place thirty years earlier, must be put about 750 (four years before Christ), or, to be more exact, in the month of December, 749 (year 5 B.C.).

These two dates (749 and 780) settled upon — the one as fixing the nativity of Jesus, the other that of the commencement of His ministry — there remains only to be determined the period of His death, in order to arrange the chronicle of His whole life. It took place, as we shall see later, on the fortieth of Nisan (Friday, the seventh of April) 783 A.U.C. (the thirtieth year of our era). And hence there must have been four Passovers during the public life of Jesus. That of 780 marks the beginning of His preaching [4] and teaching; a second (781) would seem to be the one referred to by Saint John in his fifth chapter [5] as that in which Jesus cured a paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda.[6] The Saviour did not attend the third (782); it was just about the time when He multiplied the loaves in Galilee, and to His disciples promised a New Pasch; the fourth Passover [7] was that of His death (783).

As for the ministry of John the Baptist, it preceded the first Pasch of 780 by some months. But the period that elapsed between the autumn of 779 and that of 780 had been observed by all Judea as a Sabbatical Year. We knew what that term meant in the Mosaic legislation. Every seven years the fields were left fallow; what they brought forth of themselves were divided between the poor, the foreigners and the cattle, while over all Judea there was a full remission of all debts. Is it not most probable that John Baptist appeared at the beginning of this year, when such a protracted period of leisure allowed of the people's listening to his message — a message in which they heard him speak of expiation, mercy, and forgiveness? The Sabbatical Year commenced,

3 John ii. 13–25.
4 John ii. 13.
5 John v. 1.
6 John vi. 4.
7 John xiii. 1.

like the civil year, in the month of Tishri (September); therefore the ministry of John Baptist preceded the baptism of Jesus by about three months. A tradition of the primitive Church locates the latter event about the sixth of January, during that same winter.

We may conclude from these facts that the various events in the life of Jesus Christ may reasonably be connected with the following dates:

749	A.U.C.,	5	B.C.,	Dec. 25	Nativity of Jesus
779	"	26	A.D.,	Sept.,	John the Baptist
780	"	27	"	Jan.,	Baptism of Jesus Christ
780	"	27	"	April,	First Pasch (John ii.)
781	"	28	"	April,	Second Pasch (John, v.)
782	"	29	"	April,	Third Pasch (John, vi.)
783	"	30	"	April,	Death of Jesus Christ

Whichever view one may choose to follow in this matter of dates, there is no reason for laying any very great stress upon it, after all; for Saint Luke only alludes cursorily to such dates as he gives, and without ever being diverted from his subject. But, on the other hand, he goes into a detailed account of the names of sovereigns and countries, in order to give a survey of the world at the point of time when John Baptist began to preach. He mentions the lands through which the Saviour moved; he tells what princes held sway in each. It is therefore the field of the ministry of Jesus which is here spread before our eyes.

First of all, let us glance over the regions included in that field. Two of these provinces, Judea and Galilee, are already known to us. However, it may be remarked that this latter comprised also (as belonging to the realm of Herod Antipas) the mountains of Galaad, which the Gospel calls by the name of Perea, "the country on the other side of Jordan."

Below this province begins the domain of Philip, containing the pasture lands of Basan. On the east, "the land of the Trachonites"; and on the north, "Iturea." This last-named region, with its rich meadow country in the south, gradually grows more and more forbidding of aspect the nearer we approach to Damascus. The ground is rugged, strewn with jagged rocks and black boulders, and the flocks feed within the craters of extinct volcanoes.

Still wilder and more gloomy is the Trachonite country. It lies between Iturea, Basan, and the desert, only elevated some thirty feet above the undulating plains of Hauran — like a shoal of rocks in a sea of verdure. Any one might imagine, viewing the chaotic condition of these dreary wilds, that some time, long ago, huge waves of basalt had been petrified all at once in the midst of a tremendous tempest. Some violent upheaval must have been the cause of these ugly chasms, dark caves, and deep defiles, which make the waste lands of Lejah [8] an object of wonderment. Such it was in the days of Jesus, and such we find it still today; for neither time nor man has changed the character of this strange country. The sixty cities of Argob — "the Heap of Rocks," as the Hebrews called them — have still preserved intact their rugged walls and their

[8] 3 Kings iv. 13.

houses with doors made of stone — all so dark and gloomy that, in the time of Solomon, they were believed to be made of bronze. Abilene, the province ruled by that Lysanias whom Saint Luke puts last in his list, is a country of a more charming complexion. It lies about the base of the Antiliban Mountains. The traveller who leaves Damascus for Baalbek, after a six hours' journey in a gorge made fertile by the waters of Barada, encounters the ruins of ancient Abila (called today Souk Ouadi Barada), the many inscriptions found in this locality leaving no doubt as to this point. This city was the capital of a principality which extended from Hermon to Libanus, and of which the origin is very doubtful. Josephus and Strabo speak of a Ptolemy, son of Menneus, who held sway over the plains of the Marsyas, in the mountainous country of Iturea, and counted among its towns Chalcis, at the foot of Libanus, and Heliopolis (Baalbek). This Ptolemy had a son, Lysanias, who was put to death by Antony, at the instigation of Cleopatra, who thus wrested from him his realm. What became of this principality thereafter? Did it pass into the hands of Herod, who, as we know, purchased from Cleopatra a parcel of her domains in Syria, and obtained the remainder from Augustus after the battle of Actium? There is room here for any number of conjectures, since after the death of Lysanias no mention of his kingdom is found anywhere until the time (about sixty years later it was) when Saint Luke mentions this same region in connection with a Lysanias — no longer as king but tetrarch — of Abila. The division of Palestine and the neighbouring country into Tetrarchies did not take place until the death of Herod. Probably during that epoch a prince of the lines of Ptolemy and Lysanias, and bearing the name of the latter king, received from Rome, along with the title of tetrarch, a portion of the kingdom of his fathers, and so made Abila the centre of a new state. The historian Josephus had some knowledge of this tetrarchy, since he takes care to distinguish between the Abila of the second Lysanias and Chalcis, the capital of the first ruler of that name; and, furthermore, we possess inscriptions later than the time of Herod which in like manner make mention of a Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene.

The other princes who lived in the time of Jesus were sons of Herod the Great, and had inherited his estates. It is true that their father's will only designated two among them for the succession — Archelaus and Antipas; but in those days everything happened in Judea according to the good pleasure of Rome, and Augustus had little respect for any dispositions made by the old king. Half of his territory — Idumea, Samaria, and Judea — was handed over to Archelaus; the rest, divided in equal parts, formed two tetrarchies, which, following the proper acceptation of this term, comprised each a quarter of the kingdom of Herod. One such portion fell to the lot of Antipas; it was composed of Galilee and Perea. The other was reserved for Philip — the son whom Herod had by Cleopatra of Jerusalem, and who while he was being educated at Rome had won the imperial favour. His tetrarchy extended from the Lake of Genesareth to the sources of the Jordan. It comprised Iturea and Trachonitis, as we have already seen, and beyond this countries much more

fertile — Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and Batanea; these altogether went to make up his province. During the entire lifetime of Jesus these countries enjoyed peace under the government of a prince who was just, humane, and a patron of the arts. More than once did the Saviour pass along its pleasant paths, whether it was to seek a retreat near Mount Hermon, or to rest within its fresh blooming valleys watered by the springs of the Jordan.

Of all the regions which we have been naming over, no one listened for a longer time to the teachings of the Saviour than Galilee. Antipas, tetrarch of this province, was an indolent and dissipated prince, entirely engrossed in the pursuit of vicious pleasures and in courting the favour of Tiberius; he was of a nature which would be apt to pay little heed to a matter which appeared so trivial, to his way of thinking, that it need not cause him any uneasiness. His only desire in the matter was to witness some of the wonders concerning which rumour had aroused his curiosity.[9]

As for Archelaus, he could never have been seen by Jesus; for in the tenth year of the Divine childhood this prince was deposed and exiled among the Gauls. From the outset Augustus had distrusted his weak and passionate nature, and he only vouchsafed to allow him for a time the title of ethnarch, promising him that of king if he proved himself worthy thereof. But the Emperor saw his forebodings amply and immediately justified; for the Jews were shortly stirred to revolt by the tyranny of their new ruler. Hence it became necessary to withdraw what little power had been conferred upon him.

Thus vanished even that poor shadow of independence which had still remained to Judea. Augustus made the country merely an appendage to Syria, the government of which was then in the hands of Publius Sulpicius Quirinius. Nevertheless, the importance of Judea, as well as the necessity of restraining so uneasy a people, made necessary the presence of a procurator invested with almost absolute authority.[10]

A Roman knight, Coponius, was the first to fill this difficult position. He was obliged to use force to bend this stubborn country beneath his yoke, and impose upon it the tax levy which had been decreed for the whole empire. It required all the influence that the High Priest Joazar could exert to prevent a general uprising; but he could not, by any efforts, discourage a certain few fanatics, who revolted at a signal from Judas the Gaulonite and the Pharisee Sadoc. Their attempts were at once suppressed; but the frequent executions only exalted their courage; and, ever after, similar Zealots did not cease to trouble the peace of Jerusalem, still repeating their war-cry: "We have no other Master but God." These seditions, which were continually springing up, exhausted the patience of the first governors promptly enough. In less than ten years we see three Romans, each in turn endeavouring to direct the affairs of Judea — Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, and Annius Rufus.

With Tiberius, Judea entered upon a calmer era, and during the twenty-three years of his reign it received but two procurators — Valerius Gratus and

9 Luke xxiii. 8.

10 [Originally appointed as financial secretaries to governors of provinces, in Imperial times procurators were often entrusted with the entire administration of parts of the Imperial provinces, and even possessed the *Jus Gladii*.]

Pontius Pilate. Of the former, the only fact on record which is remembered of him is the facility with which he deposed the high priests; for finding Annas invested with these lofty functions on his entering into office, he substituted Ismael, son of Fabi; then, after him, Eleazor, son of Annas; a little later, Simon, son of Camith; and, finally, Joseph Caiphas, son-in-law of Annas.

Pontius Pilate, who succeeded him, has attained a sad renown. In the twelfth year of Tiberius, being charged with the government of Judea, he showed himself, at the outset, such as he was to the last moment — a man with a predisposition to justice, but rendered unreliable by a combination of ambition and cowardice. One of his first acts was to send a Roman garrison, with their standards, to Jerusalem. His predecessor, more politic than he, had been careful not to intrude within the Temple walls with those Roman ensigns, emblazoned with idolatrous legends and insignia; they even forbore to interfere with the troops of Zealots. But at the command of Pilate legionaries broke down the gates in the night time, and at dawn the populace saw with horror those impure images contaminating the Citadel of God. A suppliant throng was despatched to Cesarea, and during five years kept beseeching Pilate with their clamorous petitions. The Governor, wearying of their persistency, ordered the soldiers to surround the crowd and disperse them by force of arms. At their approach the Jews cast themselves flat upon the ground, preferring to die rather than to endure any violation of the Law. Pilate was compelled to yield to their stubborn resolution, and withdrew his standards.

At another time, a little later than this, he was even less successful in a similar enterprise. He suspended, along the walls of his palace in Jerusalem, golden shields with the names of pagan divinities graven upon their glittering surfaces. Again the people rose up in revolt, and Tiberius himself ordained the removal of those emblems, which were so abhorred by his new subjects.

It was not merely this vacillation between rashness and timidity which militated against Pilate's authority; even his favours were treated with disdain. Jerusalem lacked a sufficiency of water; he decided to bring the needed supply from a distance of about three leagues, introducing it into the city through one of those majestic aqueducts, such as remain to this day a grand memorial of ancient Rome. But the people, upon learning that the revenues of the Temple were to be devoted to this project, laid hold upon the workmen and put a stop to all labour upon it. Much blood was spilt before the rebels were suppressed.

This persistent hostility put Pilate's capricious nature out of all patience, and he decided to follow the example of his predecessors. He retired to Cesarea, upon the borders of the sea, administered the government while keeping aloof from the people, and contented himself with levying taxes and putting a check upon unruly spirits. It was only during the feast of the Pasch that he would condescend to occupy the fortress Antonia with a detachment of his troops; for from this seat he could dominate the Temple with its throngs, while he held his forces in readiness to crush out any insurrection.

Of all the members of the Sanhedrin, those who conceived the bitterest animosity against Jesus were the princes of the priesthood. And so, because they

had such a preponderating influence in that Council, Saint Luke mentions this fact at the outset of his Gospel — that Annas and Caïphas were the two leaders of the great sacerdotal body during the public life of the Saviour. Annas, it would seem, held the first place there. Although deposed from his office by Valerius Gratus, the predecessor of Pilate, he not only retained enough influence to procure the elevation of his five sons, together with this same son-in-law Caïphas, to the pontificate, but he even managed to maintain a rigorous authority in all the councils of the high priests who succeeded him. Undoubtedly the Jews who held the more tenaciously by their theocratic institutions in proportion as the Romans infringed upon them more insolently, in this instance, would regard the continual changes imposed upon their royal priesthood as illegal and without force. Exasperated by such sacrileges, they would, to all outward appearance indeed, submit to the pontiff put over them by the will of Rome; but all the same they would look upon one man alone as their legitimate head. This man was Annas, whom, as we shall see, they loaded with attention and honours.

Such was the government of Judea in the time of Jesus Christ, such the circumstances amid which He appeared, and to which Saint Luke has been careful to call our attention. As he was addressing readers who were familiar with the period and the places of which he speaks, a few words sufficed for his purpose; today we need to know much more of detail in order to give the words of the Evangelist their original clearness and importance.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Matt. iii. 1–17; Mark i. 1–11; Luke iii. 1–22

In a westerly direction from Jerusalem and near the village of Aïn Karim, you will find a cave which still bears the name of John. It is a considerable cavern, difficult of access, and retains no sign of habitation, save a stone bench hewn out of the rock, made to serve for a bed or couch; a few stunted shrubs surround the mouth, and close by there is a spring, beneath which a basin has been hollowed out. It is here, as the local traditions tell us, the son of Zachary grew to manhood. The solitary reaches round about are called "John's Desert," and some would even go so far as to make this neighbourhood the birthplace of the Precursor. We have seen that much weightier evidences have secured that distinction for the region about Hebron. So, then, Aïn Karim is only one of those numerous retreats in which the Prophet passed the solitary days and years of his early life.

From his very infancy, in fact, John had given signs of a strength of soul far from common, and though by right of inheritance he might have claimed the

office of Sacrificer, he quitted the Temple to bury himself in the desert.[1] By this term is to be understood the wild hill country which reaches from Hebron to Jerusalem, being no more than a series of steep ranges, cleft and broken into by a number of parched and arid valleys; a patch of dry underbrush, here and there, is all that varies the monotony of those chalky stretches, whose glare so wearies one's eyes. Even this dreary undergrowth disappears as you near the Dead Sea; the desolation now comes to be complete, an absolute waste; the sight can descry nothing but an undulating moorland, as it were, made up of gray fields of ashes; while in the distance the attainted lake exhales its noisome breath, recalling the memory of Sodom's awful condemnation. Such is the appearance of the desert where John dwelt until the age of thirty, not as a hermit, but wandering about, like the prophets of olden time, without other shelter than the caverns of the mountains or the scanty foliage of the thickets.

In the midst of this wilderness, blasted by the thunderbolts of divine Justice, John grew to an understanding of his mission. All things must have revealed it to him, both the wondrous happenings at his birth and the prophecies which foretold his coming. Two of these predictions are mentioned in the Gospel. That of Malachy [2] prophesied that the Lord would send before His Messiah a messenger, to prepare the way against His coming. In the other, Isaiah tells us to hearken "to the voice of him who cries out in the desert: [3] Prepare ye the way for the Lord; make straight His paths; every deep defile shall be filled up; every mountain and little hill laid low; the crooked paths shall be straightened out, the rugged places become plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation which cometh of God." These impassable ravines, these mountains rising around him on every side, these steep pathways, forced by the great boulders and precipices to make innumerable curves and windings — all these were before the eyes of John; and to him, as to Isaiah, these all only betokened that desolation, midmost the wilderness of souls, which he must needs make ready for the coming of the Messiah. As the Precursor of Jesus, he was to run before Him, just as heralds announce the sovereigns of the East, with trumpet and loud voice, bidding all make clear the thoroughfares to do honour to the royal progress.

John was preparing himself for his ministry, not only by meditating on what Heaven revealed to him, but by the practice of the most austere virtues. Consecrated to God by the vow of the Nazarite, he never tasted either of the fruit of the vine or of strong liquor, nor had his locks ever been shorn.[4] But soon this abstinence seemed to him too common and too slight. All his food, in the desert, was limited to locusts,[5] and the wild honey found among the rocks. His frame became reduced by fasting. Gaunt and half-naked, wearing no other covering than a leathern girdle about his loins, while over his shoulders hung a cloak of camel's hair.

Therefore, so soon as John entered the valley of Jericho, all eyes were drawn to him, while forthwith they recalled how Elias was caught up in the chariot of fire, from these same fields of theirs.[6] They had always believed that the

1 Luke i. 80.
2 Matt. iii. 1.
3 Is. xl. 3.
4 Luke i. 15; Num. vi.
5 In Judea they furnished a staple article of diet for the poor.
6 4 Kings ii. 1–14.

Thesbite had been but lifted up into the heavens that he might descend again upon some future day. This Malachy had declared. But that famous prophecy, in which he alluded to both precursors, had only perplexed the minds of the Jews. They could not distinguish John, the herald of the living Christ, from Elias who was to precede the last coming of the Lord; and as Elias was alone named by the prophet, it was to him solely that their hopes had reverted. And hence always, upon the least rumour that God had raised up a new seer, one single question sprung to the lips of the whole people:

"Is it Elias?"

On beholding John, their excitement was all the more natural, since in him there was really revived the lofty fervour and austere features of the most illustrious of all the prophets; the same abruptness in manifesting himself, the same ascetic garb, the same strong speech. The resemblance was so perfect that the people were mistaken, and believed that the Thesbite had returned, just as he is painted in the song of the son of Sirach: [7]

He hath arisen, Elias, the prophet who is as a fire!
His word burns like a torch.
He hath brought down upon Israel a famine,
And, in his mighty zeal, he hath made them very few.
Armed with the word of the Lord, he hath shut up the heavens,
And, from thence, three times hath he drawn down fire.
What glory unto thee, Elias, flash forth these wondrous deeds:
Who then shall equal thy renown?
Thou who hast awaked the dead men from their tombs,
Thou who didst bring them up from Hades by the word of the Most High!
Thou who hast brought down kings, down to perdition,
And the haughty ones from their beds of soft repose!
Thou hast hearkened to the sentence upon Sinai,
And upon Horeb heard decrees of vengeance
And thou hast anointed kings unto penance,
And the prophets, that they may come after thee.
Uplifted in the fiery whirlwind's midst,
Upon the chariot with steeds of flame,
Thou art preserved to give us warning of the fateful hour,
And to appease His wrath, ere ever it blaze fiercely forth;
To reconcile the hearts of the fathers unto the children,
And to restore again the tribes of Israel!
Blessed are they who have beheld thee, that they have been beloved by thee!

The hope of finding a prophet so famous thrilled the heart of all Israel, and on every side they flocked to the Jordan. Here it was that John commenced his mission. "His voice resounded through the desert of Judea," says Saint Matthew,[8] by which we are to understand (following Saint Luke [9]), "throughout all the country which borders upon the Jordan."

In fact this stream bears a singular aspect, because of its flowing along between uninhabited banks. No craft ever furrows its waters; no town is builded along its brink. The valley through which it rushes on its way is called by the Greeks the Channel (The Aulon), and by the Arabs the Gorge (The Ghor).

7 Ecclesiastic xlviii. 8 Matt. iii. 1. 9 Luke iii. 2, 3.

It merits both these names; now extending itself to some width, then again intrenched between the mountainsides which overhang it. In the middle way lies a long gully, forming the bed of the Jordan, which flows along hidden beneath a leafy screen of willows and azaroles. At a distance this green line, winding through the barren pass, is all that there is to indicate the presence of the stream.

The prophet generally remained near some ford; for he baptised by immersion, and everywhere else the steep riverbanks make it difficult of access. John the Evangelist, at this point, speaks of a place named "Bethany or Bethbara, over beyond the Jordan." Both these words signify alike "the house at the passage," and hence we know that the river used to be crossed at this spot. The tradition which locates this ford opposite Jericho says that Jesus received baptism here, together with a great number of those who had come from the south. John remained a long time at Bethany, for that route was frequented by the Jews who travelled between Perea and Jerusalem. Only toward the end of his life do we see him ascending the course of the stream, as far as Œnon (The Springs); this was near Salem, and above the Pass of Succoth, over which Jacob crossed on his return from Mesopotamia. So that, with Jericho on the south, Œnon to the north, keeping to the valley of the Jordan, we have marked out for us the region within which John preached and baptised. He exercised his ministrations there with entire freedom, passing from one bank to the other, but without ever withdrawing far from the streams of water, which were necessary for baptism and the symbol of his mission.

It is often asked whence the Precursor borrowed this rite, and some believe that it is to be connected with the ablutions which were ordained for Jewish proselytes. But why need we look to an origin so uncertain as this? What moved John with the desire of baptising was, in the first place, the example of those frequent purifications commanded by the Law; but, most of all, the exhortations of the prophets,[10] which urged them to wash away the stains of sin from their souls, while they thus purified their bodies. John's baptism was only figurative of this cleansing of the heart, and, to make it clear that true contrition must penetrate through all secret recesses of the soul of man, the Precursor chose to immerse the whole body of the sinner.

One other ordeal was enjoined upon his penitents by the Baptist — that of confessing their sins. The sacred text seems to insinuate that he even made it an express condition of baptism.[11] Did it only go so far as an acknowledgment that all men are sinners? Christian antiquity never tolerated any such belief, for it was in remembrance of the confession prescribed by John that the catechumens made a voluntary declaration of their sins.

And, after all, the persuasions by which John incited them to penance leave no doubt as to the motive animating his thought. It is all summed up in those words:

"Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is nigh unto you!"

The Kingdom of Heaven, no longer the kingdom upon earth, of which

10 Is. i. 16; iv. 4. 11 Mark i. 5.

Israel was in expectation. The Jewish doctors, deluded by their own chimeras, had but travestied that expression, "the Kingdom of Heaven," by making it portend the temporal triumph of the Messiah; but John restored to it its real significance, and by this proclaimed the divine character of the coming reign.

This message thrilled them with all the more emotion since everything about the Baptist spoke to their souls so insistently, moving them to true contrition. He was a voice — "a Voice crying in the desert, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' " [12] He was listened to by the sons of Israel, who were just then celebrating a solemn Sabbatical Year, and so, during the leisure hours of those holy days of rest, felt their hearts stirred with deeper yearnings than ever before for the coming of the Messiah. More than that (let us never lose sight of this fact) there are certain times when grace moves upon the spirit of this world in more notable abundance; the appearance of John the Baptist was the signal of one such great epoch. The hand of God laid hold upon the agitated throng and bore them on towards the sacred stream. They came from either bank, "from Jerusalem, from Judea, and from the countries lying round the Jordan"; [13] that is to say, from Perea, from Samaria, from Galilee, and from Gaulanitis. Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, publicans, soldiers, courtesans, one and all, hurried to listen to this man's word, so stern and relentless to all imposture, all pride and luxury.

The poor and humble ones were the first to kneel before the envoy of Heaven. One after another they stepped down into the stream of the Jordan, weeping, confessing their sins, and, by their penitence, giving an efficacy to John's baptism which it had not in itself. But when it came to the turn of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and when the stern prophet saw them advancing to play a hypocritical part in the performance of the sacred rite, then rang out those thundering words, bringing them to a halt there upon the bank:

"Breed of vipers," [14] he cried, "of whom have you learned to flee from the wrath that is to come?"

These great ones of Judea had never listened to such language as this; they were used to see foreheads bowed down to the ground before them, while all Jerusalem hailed them as her masters. John tore away the mask:

"Show me some worthy fruits of repentance," was his command, "and do not venture to say among yourselves: 'We have Abraham for our father.' For I say to you, God is able to make these stones give birth to children unto Abraham."

It were impossible to strike these haughty men with a better aimed or a more trenchant blow. It was useless for them to pride themselves upon their ancestry. John had declared that to be sons of Abraham by the flesh was of no avail to them, if they were not the true offspring of his virtue and his faith. The same Hand which had formed Adam out of clay, and brought Isaac from the bosom which was chill and barren as a stone,[15] could likewise bring forth from

12 Mark i. 3.
13 Matt. iii. 5.
14 Matt. iii. 7–9.
15 Is. v. 1.

the very pebbles of this riverbed the seed promised unto Abraham, innumerable as the stars of heaven, or as the sand upon the shores of the sea.[16]

Thus, finally, the ancient alliance was declared to be dissolved, and with it went the loftiest prerogative of Israel — that ancient privilege which had exalted it above all the nations. For, John added, "Already the axe is at the root of the trees. Every tree which will not bear good fruit shall be cut down and thrown into the fire." [17] And yet this warning was to be of no avail. Humiliated, but not converted, the Pharisees and Sadducees withdrew from the Jordan, while only a very few of their number bowed down beneath the hand of John, and received his baptism.[18]

Though he was unsparing, even to harshness, toward these supercilious formalists, the Precursor had only words of mercy and kindness for the common people. When, in their turn, the crowd gathered around the prophet, asking, "And we too; what must we do?" [19] John did not tell them to imitate his penitential life; he was content to preach to them the duties of almsgiving and fraternal love.

"Let him who has two coats give to him who has none, and let him who has food use it in like manner."

The publicans drew near as well. Hateful to the Jews from their office as collectors of the Roman tax, they came to seek John, ready to sacrifice everything for this baptism.[20]

"Master, what shall we do?" they asked him.

He did not oblige them to throw up this despised business of theirs; but rising above the narrow views of his countrymen, he recognised that they might serve the public authority without wronging the people.

"Demand nothing," he said, "above that which has been commanded you."

Certain soldiers, upon their march, passed near to where John was preaching, and witnessed some of these scenes of pardon. These also, yielding to grace, questioned the prophet, and he told them: "Do not do any violence, nor any fraud; be content with your pay."

This was the way he chose to throw open the gates of the celestial kingdom, and thus he prepared them for the coming of Jesus, by preaching, not a visionary perfection, but a godly and upright fulfilment of man's daily duties, and the ordinary virtues of each one's state of life.

Yet, notwithstanding, every day the excitement increased with the growing concourse of people about the Baptist. Very soon it was not only of Elias that they spoke, but the whole country began to cherish the thought that this might indeed be the Christ.[21] John heard them, and his reply came quick and sharp:

"As for me, I baptise you with water, in order that you may do penance; but after me there cometh One who is mightier than I; I am not worthy to loosen — to bear His shoes. He it is who shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." [22]

16 Gen. xxii. 17.
17 Matt. iii. 10.
18 Luke vii. 30.
19 Luke iii. 10, 11.
20 Luke iii. 12, 13.
21 Luke iii. 15, 16.
22 Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 16.

No longer a baptism of water, unquickened and lifeless, as was that of the Precursor, but an ablution made fruitful by the Holy Ghost.

These are but fragments recalled from the many sermons which John preached; for "he spoke many other exhortations, evangelising the people." [23] If that message of his had come down to us in its entirety, throughout all his speech we should find the same eloquence, alive with the figures of the desert, with its scarped cliffs, hissing serpents, and gnarled tree-trunks, among which he had lived for so long a time.

Yet sometimes, too, he spoke of their fields and harvests, as when he depicted the Messiah as a thresher, with the huge cradle of the harvester in His hand,[24] throwing upon the air the good grain, mingled with all its impurities, to be winnowed by the wind, even as He does today in His Church upon earth; Whose wheat are the elect, whom He receives again purified for the heavenly storehouse; the chaff, those profitless souls which shall forever be consumed. "The fan is in His hand," he said, "and He will cleanse His floor; He will gather together the good grain into His granary, and will burn the chaff in a fire which shall not be extinguished." [25]

He whom John announced under such animated imagery followed close upon the footsteps of His herald. The Baptist, as we have remarked already, began his ministry in the month of September, with the beginning of the Sabbatical Year; three months after this Jesus appeared upon the banks of the Jordan. According to the primitive traditions they were then in the middle of winter; for the mild climate of Jericho permitted John to pursue his practice of immersion during this season.

Although united by ties of kinship, Jesus and His forerunner do not seem to have had any intercourse until this time. One had grown up in Galilee, the other in the desert. "I did not know Him," [26] is said twice, in fact, by John the Baptist, "but He Who hath sent me to baptise with water said to me: 'He upon Whom you shall see the Holy Ghost coming down and abiding with Him, He it is Who baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.'" Watching solely for the fulfilment of this promise, John awaited the covenanted signal from on high.

But even before this marvel did actually take place, the prophet recognised Jesus. It may have been by revelation from Heaven; it may have been by some divine lineaments making the Master known to His messenger. The Lord had followed the throng of Galileans to the Jordan; He was therefore surrounded by the surging crowds when He was seen by the Precursor. John had thought to finish his ministry when the Christ should appear; so what must have been his awe and wonder when he saw Him descending into the waters of the stream with the penitents, and heard Him ask for baptism at his hands!

"I ought to be baptised by Thee," he exclaimed, "and dost Thou come to me!" and he withstood Him.

23 Luke iii. 18.

24 Toward evening, at the time when usually in the East a strong breeze blows up, the husbandmen toss the threshed compound of grain and loose straw into the air by the aid of a fan (a huge shovel with a very short handle); the grain, as it is the heavier, falls back to the earth, while the chaff and lighter refuse are carried off to some distance by the wind.

25 Matt. iii. 12.

26 John i. 31, 33.

"Suffer Me to do this now," said Jesus; "thus it behoveth us to fulfil all justice."

It was indeed the decree of Heaven that the Christ should efface our sins by placing Himself among the ranks of common sinners.

John resisted no longer, but immersed Jesus in the Jordan; and lo, at the moment when the Lord arose from the waters, and was in prayer, the heavens were thrown open, the Holy Ghost came down upon Him in the form of a dove, and rested over Jesus; at the same time a Voice came from the far heights, which said: "This is My dearly beloved Son, in Whom I am always well pleased."

This vision does not seem to have attracted the attention of the Jews towards Jesus. Without doubt they did not hear the Voice of God, but only, as it were, a noise as of thunder; but John could not have misapprehended the spectacle which was intended for his eyes alone. In that instant he perceived all that appeals to our reverent thoughts of it — the Trinity made manifest to man for the first time: the Father in the Voice falling from the heavens, the Son in Jesus, the Holy Ghost in the dove, symbol of grace, whose reign was now begun in the world. Then, too, he saw the waters of earth sanctified by the presence of the Christ, receiving of Him the power to purify souls in baptism. Then he saw Jesus proclaimed the Son of God — that Son of Whom the Psalmist sang,[27] begotten in the bosom of God, before the day-star and the sunrise were conceived.

Drawn thither by memories such as these, a caravan of some six or seven thousand pilgrims every year leaves the Holy City, in the Paschal season, to go down to the Jordan; at its head marches the Pasha of Jerusalem, and a Turkish escort wards off the robbers, who still infest the defiles just as they did in the days of the good Samaritan. These throngs, of most various complexion and costume, make their camp at evening near Gilgal, in the place where the Israelites long since pitched their tents, after having crossed the stream.[28] On the morrow, two hours before dawn, the clang of the kettle-drums awakens the multitude; thousands of torches flare up over the plain, and the crowds are far along on their road before the heat of the day becomes insupportable. The first rays of the sun are just gilding the mountaintops of Moab, when the great caravan arrives at the spot where the Jordan is of easy access; horses, asses, mules, camels (which sometimes carry a whole family), pick out a pathway through the brushwood, and so, wading out in the current, the pilgrims perform their pious ablutions.

Formerly, at that place, long marble slabs beautified the banks, and a Cross rose out of the midst of the waves above the very spot where Jesus was baptised. Priests went before the pilgrims into the waters, to sanctify them with solemn prayers, casting balm and flowers on the stream; then only did the faithful step down into the river, clad in a garment which they afterwards took away with them, and in which they were robed in death.

These customs are now but a dim-remembered story. The churches, the

27 Ps. cix. 3. 28 Josue iii.

monasteries, once so numerous along the banks, today only encumber them with their ruins; while the pilgrims who bathe in the stream are no longer sons, as of old, submissive to their Mother. Greeks, Copts, Jacobites, Armenians, all have rent asunder the seamless robe of the Church, and display before the eyes of the Mussulmans those piteous divisions which they have made in the Kingdom of the Christ. Nevertheless they all, by this common homage paid to the Jordan and to Jesus, bear witness to the fact that in these lands the Saviour once besought His Father that the one baptism and one only Faith might regenerate the world. This prayer, uttered by Him unto whom the heavens hearkened "for the reverence which was His due," [29] may not be denied forever. A time will come — would that it might be soon! — when all Christian peoples will plunge once more into the rivers of Jordan to be made one in Jesus, without a shadow of reserve, in a perfect unity of faith, hope, and love.

CHAPTER III

THE TEMPTATION

Matt. iv. 1–11; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1–13

The Holy Spirit had rested upon Jesus not only to bear witness outwardly to the grace which abounded within Him, but to exercise an active influence over Him. And therefore, so soon as the Christ had received this consecration, He was "led by the Spirit," Saint Matthew recounts; [1] "impelled," says Saint Luke; [2] "thrust out," borne away, driven "into the desert," according to Saint Mark.[3] The energy of the terms chosen by the Evangelists plainly indicates that though the Spirit of God never failed to guide the steps of the Saviour, yet there was, here and now, a more sensible and lively motion than was customary upon the part of the Holy Ghost.

Intrusting Himself to this Divine compulsion the Lord went up into the desert.[4] By this name all the traditions understand a certain hill to the west of Jericho, which now bears the name of the Fortieth (Quarantine), in memory of the fasting of Jesus, rising above the fountain of Eliseus, its sides all honeycombed with caves. Long ago, whole communities of hermits dwelt there, anxious to lead their solitary life in imitation of their Redeemer, in the very spot where He consecrated, by His example, the way of abstinence and prayer.

But no monastic discipline ever equalled in austerity the penance done by Jesus; for it was in the midst of winter that He buried Himself in that retreat — at a time when the wilderness is more desolate than ever — the very skies are pitiless, and the trees are bare of fruit, and stripped of their leafy screens. Here He abode in an entire solitude, "alone with the wild beasts," [5] surrounded by lions and leopards, which lurk in the thickets of the Jordan,[6] amid the jackals

29 Hebr. v. 7.
1 Matt. iv.
2 Luke iv.
3 Mark i.
4 Matt. iv.
5 Mark i. 13.
6 Jerem. xlix. 19; l. 44; Zachar vi. 3.

whose mournful howling is still heard along the mountains. And they harmed Him not; for the creatures are but armed against a sinful race,[7] and the holiness of Jesus held absolute sway over their savage natures.

But it was to attain far other triumphs than these that the Saviour had gone up into the desert. He had come hither that He might be tempted. The New Adam, He was come to take up the combat at the point where the first had failed and fled, and to turn defeat into victory. Yet what manner of trial was this with which He must needs make issue? Must we really, with the rationalists, treat it all as a vision, in which the Christ, like the heroes of ancient fable, was given to choose between the paths of virtue and of vice? Did the Saviour, in relating His temptation to His disciples, represent it as being merely an allegory? There is nothing in the Gospels to suggest such a thought; and it is only by a preconceived idea of stripping the scene of everything marvellous that one can be brought to consider it otherwise than as an actual happening.

However it is a profitless effort at best; for what astounds us in the inspired record is not so much the wonders wrought, then and there, as it is the simple fact of a God being tempted. Theology has no problem to offer us requiring more delicate discrimination in its solution. Could the world have anything wherewith to seduce a Divine nature? Where was the merit in such a victory for a soul which could not sin? At every step the mind must halt before the brink of an abyss, and of necessity we must acknowledge that here the mystery of the Incarnation presents one of its features which still remains shrouded in deepest obscurity to mortal ken.

Without pretending to illuminate those infinite depths, we ought to make it clearly understood, however, that the greatest difficulty comes from the idea, ordinarily entertained, that the temptation of Jesus was like to ours. There is scarcely any appetite for evil in us which does not leave some traces of its passage throughout our souls. Let the wretched thought be as swift as may be, the first movement of the heart is too often as if she would detain it. There was nought of this in Jesus; for having taken no part in the perversion of our humanity, he could not know those desires which awake within us without our consent, and which are nevertheless our own, because we can detect therein either the promptings of past faults, or the seed sown by inherent concupiscence. Jesus was but tempted outwardly, by an imagery and eloquence appearing most strikingly to the senses, yet without the possibility of such attractions hurting His soul or staining it. If clear water be absolutely free from all impurity, the rudest shock will not at all disturb or sully its sweet limpidity; yet if it rest upon a miry bottom, the least movement will suffice to drabble it. Thus it is with Jesus and with us; those same storms in which our sinful natures oftenest suffer shipwreck could only assault and buffet Him; they could not soil the purity of the Son of Mary.

Incorruptible in the bosom of corruption, none the less was Jesus made acquainted with the struggles of our daily warfare, even as He tasted all the glories of such victory. His resistance, which was that of a hero in this tempta-

7 Rom. viii. 19–22; Wis. v. 21.

tion in the desert — which later on in the Garden of Gethsemani was unto the shedding of blood — this divine hardihood was then, and will ever continue to be, His eternal merit. And that we may better comprehend it, it is important to remember that His time of trial was not limited to the three assaults whose details are known to us, but that it was an issue consuming all of the forty days during which Jesus remained in the desert. During all that time He was tempted: [8] "And now He can have compassion upon our infirmities, for, without sinning, He hath been subject to all our temptations." [9]

It was also a season of penance for the Saviour, through which He passed without eating or drinking. It would seem that during that long fast, wrapped in prayer and inward strife, He remained unconscious of the needs of the body; "but when the forty days were spent, He was hungry," [10] and the Demon profited by that hour of weakness to attack Him in person. Under what semblance did he present himself before Jesus? Was it as a spirit of darkness, as an angel of light, or with the features of man? This the Lord did not disclose; and there is little to be gained for us by forming any conjectures.

Not less clouded in obscurity is the character of the conflict in which such mighty powers were brought to battle. Was there only that threefold attack of sensuality, vainglory, and ambition? Surely to concede only such feeble weapons as these to Satan, now in arms against his Lord, were to underrate the artifice and cunning of the Fiend. Though the Saviour passed through all our common trials, yet all that was during the forty days which preceded the last combat; at this hour, wherein the Prince of Darkness entered the lists, it would be only natural to expect that the allurements would take on somewhat of nobility commensurate with Him toward Whom they were directed, and at the same time something super-subtile and strange worthy of the fallen angel, whose wiles were all exerted then. The aim of the tempter seems to be betrayed even in his questions. He wanted to know surely who Jesus was; for that keen intellect, which still remained in spite of his overthrow as clear as ever, had seen in the Divine counsels that his ruin and the salvation of the world would be consummated on the day when the Son of God should become Incarnate.

So then he approached the Saviour. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread!"

The snare was worthy of the hand that fashioned it. Satan did not offer to those eyes hollowed by long fasting, to the lips parched with thirst, to that famished body, the enticement of luscious fruits or savory meats. He was content to remind Him Whom no lust could have mastered that He, the Son of God, held nature at His beck, and that one word from Him would suffice to change the stones into bread. Was it befitting that the Christ should perish of hunger in this wilderness, where Heaven seemed to have abandoned Him? Was it not high time to have recourse to His almighty attributes?

But Jesus could not forget that it was the will of His Father that He use this power of miracles, which belonged to Him, not for Himself, but for others. With one word He thrust back the Tempter:

8 Mark i. 13; Luke iv. 2. 9 Hebr. iv. 15. 10 Luke iv. 2.

"It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which comes from the mouth of God." [11]

Even as Israel was nourished with manna during the forty years in the desert, so the Christ would intrust Himself to the Divine loving-kindness, seeking above all else that support of the soul, which is the Word of God, His Truth.

Jesus had not responded to that query: "If you are the Son of God"; but the Devil knew that a superior being stood before him — in all likelihood the Messiah promised to Israel. Thereafter he had but one intention — to bring the Christ to unveil His mission, and thereby His nature.

Therefore he transported Him to the Holy City, and placed Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple. Then, pointing to the crowds which thronged its courts, He insinuated that the Saviour might well perform some notable prodigy in the sight of His people.

"If you are the Son of God," he said, "cast yourself below; for it is written that He hath given command to His Angels to keep guard over you,[12] and they shall bear you up in their hands, for fear lest your feet should strike against a stone."

To descend encircled by angels, to appear before the upturned eyes of men in this celestial pomp, would not this be to compel their wondering worship and to draw all hearts unto Him? Satan could not have conceived a temptation more alluring to the Messiah, than was this, and that he might render it irresistible he fortified it by the very language of Scripture.

Vain and useless wiles; for Jesus was come to irradiate the eyes, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, and to conquer souls by a grace unknown to the haughty. So He was content to add: "It is written also: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." [13]

Then the Devil transported Him to the top of a tall mountain, whence he showed unto Him in an instant all the empires of the world and their glory.

"I will give you all this power," he said, "and the glory of these kingdoms; for I have them in my dominion, and I distribute them to whom I will — all these things shall be yours, if, falling down before me, you will adore me." [14]

We would not attempt to imagine what the surroundings of that last scene in the Temptation were like; for from the summit of the Quarantine, pointed out by the primitive traditions as the locality the view only extends from Libanus to the desert of Tekoa; while, of course, it were useless to look for any height whence in the twinkling of an eye one can embrace all the kingdoms of the world. But if we are to see in the very high mountain only a figure of that power over the whole face of the world which the Demon arrogates to himself, still we may ask what is the nature of this his empire, whereof we see today only too signal proofs, and what object had he in view by thus tendering it to the Christ? Did he hope to see Him prostrate Himself at his feet? Such blindness as this can hardly be attributed to Lucifer. In this assault of the Tempter, there is evidently nothing but despair at seeing himself overcome by a man,

11 Matt. iv. 4; Deut. viii. 3.
12 Matt. iv. 6; Ps. xc. 11.
13 Matt. iv. 7.
14 Matt. iv. 8, 9; Luke, iv. 5–7.

though it be the Man God; and hence we have this cry of rage and madness. Satan asked no more: "Art Thou the Son of God?" For him there was no longer any room left for doubt; but now, made certain of his downfall, he sought at least to gratify his hate, and so blasphemed openly before the Presence. His last speech upon the mountain is but an echo of that cry of revolt which of old he had flung in the face of Heaven itself. "I will ascend," he had said long since, "and I will be like unto the Most High!" [15]

At sight of this monster of pride, Jesus so calm until then, might well have felt a movement of horror.

"Begone, Satan!" He said to him; "for it is written: Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." [16]

The Demon had discharged his last darts. "All the temptation being accomplished, he departed from Him for a time" [17]— until the hour of the Passion, until that desolation upon the Cross, when for the last time he was to attack Jesus with all the fury of despair. During the public life of the Saviour we shall see him retaining such a vivid memory of this first defeat that he is fain to fly distraught from His presence, now grovelling at His feet, while he confesses His divinity, now crying out to Him in his terror: "Wherefore comest Thou to destroy us before the time?" now beseeching Him for the bodies of swine, as a last and only refuge.[18]

After the tempest, sweeping wildly over the Mount of the Temptation, suddenly, after the storm was spent, there came a great calm; "the angels drew nigh unto Jesus, and they served Him." [19] Jewish legends tell how Moses, during his forty days of fasting on Sinai, was nourished by a wondrous harmony — the hymning of the spheres. Of yet more celestial concord was the banqueting of the Saviour, since He had for ministers unto Him those spirits of light before whom the stars of the firmament wax pale and wan, and are hushed in silence.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY, AND THE FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS

John i. 19–52

All the while that Jesus was sustaining that struggle in the desert John continued to preach along the banks of the Jordan. The gatherings grew every day greater, the enthusiasm more intense. Very soon it was spread abroad that a heavenly Voice had marked out One from among the penitents, and that the Baptist had cried aloud to the multitudes: "Behold Him of Whom I have said: 'There cometh after me a Man Who hath been set over me, because He was before me.' " [1]

15 Is. xiv. 13, 14.
16 Matt. iv. 10; Deut. vi. 13.
17 Luke iv. 13.
18 Mark iii. 11; Matt. viii. 29; Mark v. 11.
19 Matt. iv. 11.
1 John i. 15.

So, though they had been for a long time indifferent to anything said by this rude preacher, who vouchsafed only anathemas and rebuffs to the princes of Israel, yet at last the members of the Sanhedrin were aroused by these rumours which arose from all round about him. Ablution was to be one of the tokens of the mission of the Christ.[2] They began therefore to question whether John might not be the Messiah, or at least one of the prophets who were to announce Him. In order to clear up this doubt the Supreme Council despatched some of its members to the Precursor. Those chosen for this office were priests;[3] because all that pertained to the ablutions lay within the province of the sacerdotal body; and the delegates were also taken from the sect of the Pharisees,[4] noted for their scrupulous respect for all such observances. Certain of the Levites[5] acted as a sort of escort in order to enhance the dignity of the embassy.

"Who are you?" asked the ambassadors.

"John confessed it, and denied it not; and he confessed that he was not the Christ." The Evangelist by this repetition shows with what insistence the Precursor reiterated his testimony before the Sanhedrin's envoys: "I the Christ! I am not; no, I am not He."

"What, then?" was the response; "are you Elias?"

"No," answered John.

"Are you the Prophet?" they said thereupon, making allusion to the seer of whom Moses had told them.[6]

"No," replied John.

"Who are you, then?" persisted the members of the Sanhedrin — "in order that we may render an account to those who sent us here. What do you say of yourself?"

"I am the Voice of one who crieth in the desert: 'Make straight the ways of the Lord!' as hath said the Prophet Isaiah."

This response, far from touching the Pharisees, seemed to them incompatible with the right of preaching and of purifying by ablution, which John claimed for himself.

"Why do you baptise," they said, "if you are neither the Christ, nor Elias, nor the Prophet?"

John replied: "As for me, I baptise in water; but there has been One in your very midst Whom you knew not, He cometh after me, He who hath been set above me; and I am not worthy to loosen the latchet of His shoes."

Such steadfastness and humility before one greater than himself disconcerted the councillors of the Sanhedrin, who turned away, disdaining to interrogate him any further. "These things took place at Bethany, on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising"[7] — that is to say, opposite Jericho, as we have seen, and at one of the fords which allow of the stream being crossed near that city.

The Saviour, on His descending from the Mount of the Temptation, would

1. 2 Ezech. xxxvi. 25; Zahar. xiii. 3 John i. 19. 4 John i. 24. 5 John i. 19. 6 Deut. xviii. 15. 7 John i. 28.

find His way naturally to this same spot. Indeed, upon the morrow John saw him coming towards him.[8]

"Behold the Lamb of God!" he said; "behold Him Who beareth the sins of the world!"

This was enough to recall to the minds of the Jews who surrounded him the oracle uttered by Isaiah:[9] "The lamb standing dumb before his shearers, the Man of Sorrows, Who shall bear the sins of the people."

"Look," continued the Precursor, "see, and behold Him of Whom I have said: 'There cometh after me a Man Who hath been set above me, because He was before me.' And I knew Him not; yet I am come, giving you the baptism of water, that so He may be made manifest in Israel."

Plain as these words were, they did not impel any one of those who heard them — on that same day at least — to follow Jesus. The impression which they produced was soon effaced; only a certain few souls cherished the presentiment that salvation was close at hand, and began to turn their eyes to the Saviour. As for the Baptist, he was so used to waiting the divine action that he left all for grace to operate upon the people, contenting himself with simply showing them the Lord, Who must needs call unto Himself those whom He willed, and at what hour He willed to have them come.

On the following day John was walking with two of his disciples when Jesus passed on before them.[10] The Precursor, casting upon Him a glance of infinite meaning, in which shone deep love as well as wondering awe, thus gazing after Him, exclaimed:

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

Then these two disciples yielded to the prompting of those words, which had touched them so nearly the night before, and they parted company with John to go after Jesus. The Saviour very soon turned about, and seeing that they were following Him, He said: "Whom are you seeking?"

"Rabbi, where do you dwell?" was their reply.

The title they gave the Unknown and this demand of the disciples both declared what hunger and thirst for the truth filled their hearts.

"Come and see," said Jesus. And they went with Him and saw where He dwelt.

The Lord was living in one of the huts which were then built along the banks of the Jordan; perhaps it was merely one of those shelters woven from the boughs of turpentine and palm trees, beneath which the traveller spreads his mantle of hairy skins. It was about four in the afternoon (the tenth hour[11]) when the disciples entered the abode of Jesus, and "they passed the rest of the day with Him." The Evangelist does not tell us of their conversation, which was doubtless prolonged until it came to be one of those intimate communions most dear to holy souls, and from which they issue forth filled with new strength and light, with the unassailable certitude that God has revealed

8 John i. 29–31.
9 Is. liii. 7.
10 John i. 35–40.
11 John i. 39.

Himself to them. When night came on the two disciples were gained unto Jesus; they had recognised in Him the Prophet — a greater than Moses, Him for Whom Israel had been waiting for so many ages.

One of these young men who in this way came to be the first to attach themselves to Jesus was Andrew, the fisherman of Galilee, born on the shores of Lake Genesareth. The second was no other than John the Evangelist. It is easy to divine this fact from his characteristic modesty, which makes him here, as elsewhere, conceal even his name; beside this, there is the minuteness of the narrative, which enters into the slightest details, even to making note of the hour in which Jesus drew these first disciples to Him.

Simon, Andrew's brother, and a fisherman like him, had also quitted the Lake of Genesareth to go down to the Jordan. Andrew came across him.[12]

"We have found the Messiah," he said (that is to say, the Anointed, the Christ), and he brought him to Jesus.

The Saviour looked long upon him. In this Galilean He saw the immovable Rock on which he would build His Church.

"Thou art Simon, son of Jonas," He said to him; "hereafter thou shalt be called Kephas." And this signifies, translating the Hebrew names of which the Lord makes use; Thou art Simon — child of a dove, feeble and timorous as she, but hereafter thou shalt be impregnable as the cliff in which she finds her hiding-place; or again: Thou art the son of feebleness; hereafter thou shalt be firm as a rock — a play of words made sublime by their depth of meaning, and by the effects which followed upon their utterance; for from that same hour there began the slow working of a wondrous change within the son of Jonas, which was to discover itself to the whole world shortly.

The Church, at its birth, numbered already three members eager to spread abroad their faith. Not far from this spot there was still another Galilean, named Philip; [13] "he was of Bethsaïda, the village of Andrew and Peter." The Lord encountered him on the morrow, when he was preparing for his departure to Galilee.

"Follow Me!" He said to him, thus inviting him to share henceforth His life and His sufferings.

Philip only vaguely understood what was implied in this vocation; notwithstanding, so docile was he that he abandoned himself to grace and followed Jesus.

There were two ways of returning to Nazareth open to the Saviour. The one made its way through Scythopolis and by the sea of Tiberias, keeping to the banks of the Jordan; but the Galileans only took this road, which wound along the riverbanks, when they wanted to avoid the territory of the Samaritans; whenever the animosity of this people had for a time subsided they preferred a shorter road, which ascends by Bethel, and thence by Sichem and En-Gannim, coming out upon the Plain of Esdralon. A few months later we shall see Jesus taking this direction on His return to Jerusalem, and stopping at Sichem, close

12 John i. 41, 42. 13 John i. 43–45.

by Jacob's Well; but outside the season of Israel's feasts this route was fraught with no perils, and the Saviour would therefore choose it for their journey from Jericho to Cana.

Having reached the heights of the hills of Ephraim the little company were passing through Bethel and the meadows which had once witnessed the Vision of Jacob, when they perceived a Jew seated beneath a figtree. It was Nathanaël,[14] the friend of Philip, who was to become the fifth disciple of the Saviour.

The son of Tolmaï (Bar-Tolmaï), this newly elect, was of a lineage more noble than the other four, and apparently he always retained something of an air of distinction in the midst of the rest, just as he is represented, in the paintings of the Middle Ages, with his purple mantle broidered with precious stones. He was versed in sacred literature, and perhaps he was meditating there beneath the figtree; for the Jews were wont to seek the shade of this tree at the "hour of prayer."

Philip called to him: telling him, "We have found Him Whom Moses in the Law,[15] and the Prophets, have announced; 'tis Jesus the Son of Joseph of Nazareth!"

Of Nazareth! This name awoke at once in the mind of Nathanaël an invincible objection. Was it not written that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem? What was to be expected of a man hailing from an obscure village, of ill repute, and in Galilee?

"Of Nazareth!" he replied; "can anything good come from there?"

Philip still believed that Nazareth was the birthplace of Jesus, and of Joseph, His father; he did not know how to respond to the difficulties made by his friend; but with unshaken faith, all he could say was: "Come and see!"

They were indeed the very words of the Master which he repeated then; for he knew what had been their power over Andrew and John, and availed himself of them as though they were some divine charm to lure Nathanaël.

So soon as the Saviour saw the latter coming toward Him: "Behold a true Israelite," He said, "a man in whom there is no guile!"

What a meed of praise those words bestow! What is there more to be desired than to recognise within one's self this true righteousness, and know that one is "of that Israel which is not of the flesh, but of God?" [16]

Nathanaël, in his surprise at seeing himself already known, replied with quiet candour: "How do you know me?"

"Before Philip called thee," said the Saviour, "when thou were under the figtree, I saw thee."

Evidently Jesus then made an allusion to something that had occurred under the tree, before Philip called to him — some action which must be still a secret to us, but one which was as well known to Him, as it was to Nathanaël. By recalling it, the Lord revealed Himself as the Divine seer, Whose glance pierces all mysteries.

14 John i. 45–52.

15 Gen. xvii. 7; xlix. 10; Deut. xviii. 15.

16 1 Cor. x. 18; Gal. vi. 16.

"Master," cried out Nathanaël, "You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!"

These two titles explain each other. Nathanaël did not make use of the first as meaning that Jesus was the Son of God by nature, equal and consubstantial with His Father; but he recognised in Him the object of His nation's vows, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Jesus followed out the thought: "Because I have said to thee that I saw thee beneath the figtree, thou dost believe; thou shalt see things greater still. Of a truth, ay, of a truth," He repeated, "thou shalt see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

As we have hinted, the hills of Bethel undoubtedly suggested this allusion to the Lord. Therefore, that which Israel had once beheld in this very land on which they now trod, but had seen only in a dream, this it was given to Nathanaël, the true Israelite, to contemplate in reality: the heavens thrown open, to shower down grace divine; Jehovah, no longer afar off, on the cloud-hung apex of the celestial ladder, but pitching His tent in the midst of us; earth united to Heaven, by ties not visionary but everlasting, by the communion of those angels who ascend to God, bearing unto Him the prayers of men, and again descend to us, the bearers of His blessing. And this saintly commerce was no far-away hope held out to their longing hearts; for from that very hour Jesus commenced His office of mediator. He has given us assurance of this by the affirmation — the form of which Saint John has preserved for us, and which so well befitted Him who is the eternal Amen: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you: You shall see the Heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

CHAPTER V

THE WEDDING FESTIVITIES AT CANA

John ii. 1–11

With these five disciples Jesus kept on along the road northwards. As they were journeying without any train or beasts of burden, they were able to make their camp at Sichem on the first night, taking En-Gannim for the second; and from this point, after crossing the plain of Esdralon, they soon reached Nazareth. On their arrival they did not find Mary; for "on the third day [1] there was a wedding celebration at Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there." As He also was invited to take part in their merry-makings, Jesus, in company with His disciples, pushed onwards to Cana that same evening. It was just at the hour when the ceremonies of the marriage were about to commence, and the Lord, on His arrival, could assist as a guest at the most brilliant spectacle of all — the procession formed by the bridal couple, surrounded by

1 John ii. 1.

the whole family. Sacred writers allude so often to the nuptial festivals, that it would suffice merely to collect the words in which they have referred to them, in order to restore for us the bright pageant which was enacted before the eyes of Jesus.

The bride's preparations for this great day were matters of the weightiest moment. From the instant she stepped from her perfumed bath,[2] she shed around her such a wealth of fragrance that Solomon compares her, wrapped in her long veils, to a cloud of incense floating over the earth.[3] These veils are a distinctive feature of the betrothed maiden; not only covering the head, but enwreathing the whole body,[4] and concealing from sight the white and gold-embroidered robe,[5] her jewels,[6] the virgin's girdle (which no one might unclasp save only the joyous spouse),[7] and the crown of myrtle that encircled her brow.

The young maid, thus attired at the hands of her girl companions, awaited the arrival of the bridal retinue. By her side the paranymph, or bridesmaid, kept watch with the ten virgins, who must needs accompany her with lamps in their hands. It was generally at a late hour that the cry rang out: "Behold the bridegroom is here! Come ye out to meet him!" [8] In those lovely nights of the Orient, which well-nigh surpass anything our days can boast in the way of soft splendour and delicious balminess, the procession advances, led first by a troop of singers, their voices mingling with the notes of the flute and the clash of tambourines; [9] while, last of all, comes the bridegroom, gorgeously clad, his forehead wreathed with a golden turban entwined with myrtle and rose. About him march his ten friends, called "sons of the groom," [10] holding palm branches in their hands"; while his kinsmen, acting as his escort, bear lighted torches,[11] and the daughters of Israel greet him on every hand with their laughing compliments.[12] The bridegroom and his companions enter within the dwelling of the young maiden, and, taking her by the hand, he leads her toward the threshold; and here he receives the tables of stone on which is inscribed the dowry; whereupon, in merry marching train, the guests retrace their way back to the house of the fortunate youth.

A banquet is there made ready,[13] which always lasted for many a long hour, enlivened by gay enigmas and bright sallies of wit.[14] A whole week, sometimes even two, slipped by amid such rejoicings; [15] and so, to put somewhat of a check on this immoderate joy, and to recall their minds to thoughts of graver things, it was the custom, from time to time, for someone to shatter the wine-glasses of the happy pair. This was indeed to show forth in action that thought of the ancient mime: "Fortuna vitrea est, tum quum splendet frangitur." [16]

Toute notre félicité,
Sujette à l'instabilité,
En moins de rien tombe par terre;

2 Ruth iii. 3; Ezech. xxiii. 40.
3 Cant. iii. 6.
4 Gen. xxiv. 65; xxxviii. 14.
5 Apoc. xix. 8; Ps. xliv. 10, 14.
6 Is. xlix. 18; lxi. 10; Apoc. xxi. 2.
7 Jer. ii. 32.
8 Matt. xxv. 6.
9 Gen. xxxi. 27; Jer. vii. 34; xvi. 9; 1 Mac. ix. 39.
10 Jud. xiv. 11; Matt. ix. 15.
11 Matt. xxv. 7.
12 Cant. iii. 11; Ps. xliv. 15.
13 Matt. xxii. 1–10; Luke xiv. 8; John ii. 2.
14 Jud. xiv. 12.
15 Tob. viii. 23.
16 Publius Syrus.

Et comme elle l'éclat du verre,
Elle en a la fragilité! [17]

In the time of Jesus, were there the same symbolic rites performed which today are peculiar to Jewish marriages besides the ceremonies already mentioned — the long white napkin stretched over the head of the newly wed, who sit with their hands clasped under the veil, while the ring is slipped upon the finger of the bride in token of their indissoluble union. The sacred writings make no mention of these; they only tell how the guests conduct the lady to the nuptial chamber,[18] where her couch was set in state beneath a canopy,[19] sometimes even (if we may credit Jewish authorities) under a bower of blossoms.

Such were some of the ceremonies at which Jesus was a guest upon "that evening of the third day." In this instance the pomp and splendour were indeed of a somewhat modest degree; for everything seems to indicate that the family which had bidden Jesus as one of their friends was of as humble a station as He: the fact of the wine having given out so early in the feasting; the air of authority with which Mary, the wife of a carpenter, gives her orders; the respect shown her Son, who is invited, although at the time absent from home. The apparent luxury in the details of the banquet do not really contradict this conclusion; for everything which they might stand in need of — ornaments, rich furnishings, service of all kinds — these even the poorest people could always borrow of their neighbors.

Mary, who had preceded her Son to Cana, had betaken herself thither undoubtedly in order to lend her aid in the necessary preparations, thus she was able to notice how little wine her friends had to dispose of; and so too she was the first to perceive that it was falling short in the very middle of the repast. It was the unlooked-for arrival of the five disciples which had brought down this disgrace upon the young couple; for (according to an ancient witness on this point) "it happened that the wine gave out in consequence of the great number of guests."

Mary was distressed, and betaking herself to Jesus: "They have no wine," she said.

Used as she was to seeing her Son anticipate her least wishes, she continued to treat Him as she had always done hitherto still bearing herself as a Mother who is all-powerful and always to be obeyed.

But now the times were changed. In order to show Mary that He had ceased to belong to her (yet only that He might be entirely at the will of His Heavenly Father), Jesus refused to pay heed directly to her.

"Woman," He said to her, "what matters it to you and to Me? My hour has not yet come."

This answer, which sounds so harshly to our ears, has not the same meaning in the Aramean tongue. It is in frequent use among sacred writers, sometimes to denote a lively objection, sometimes only a simple dissent; both, however, were in perfect consonance with the forms of highest courtesy. As for the title

17 Corneille. 18 Jud. xv. 1; Joel. ii. 16. 19 Ps. xviii. 6; Joel. ii. 16.

"Woman," that was, indeed, a term of respect. In making use of it, Jesus tendered filial homage to her, whom He loved beyond all other creatures, and whose prayer it cost Him so dear to deny.

And, furthermore, we must needs supply to this bare refusal some words which John Evangelist either did not hear, or at least has omitted to report; for we see in the sequel that the response of the Saviour, far from disheartening Mary, gave her yet fuller assurance.

On the instant she gave orders to the servants to hold themselves in readiness at His word: "Anything that He may say to you, do it."

They had not long to delay. The last drops of wine had been poured out; there was nothing now left for the young couple except to make a humiliating avowal of their insufficient stores. Now there were standing close at hand six great urns of stone, covered with branches, as is the custom in the East, in order to keep the water cool and fresh. These vessels, each containing two or three firkins, were kept in readiness for the guests, who were required not only to wash their feet before touching the linen and drapery of their couches, but even during the meal frequently to purify their hands. Already there had been many of these ablutions performed, and the urns were being rapidly emptied. At a word from Jesus, the servants filled them with water to the brim.

"Draw out now," said the Lord, "and bear it to the master of the board." This was one of the guests, selected to preside over the feasting and to keep watch so that there might be nothing lacking. The servingmen presented him with the drinking-cup. He tasted the water changed to wine, without knowing whence it came. Those who had drawn it out were not ignorant; but even so, the stupour that had fallen on them at sight of such a prodigy now enchained their tongues.

The master of the festal board called to the bridegroom: "Every man," said he, "serves the good wine first, and when some one has over-drunk, then he serves up what is not so good. But you — why, you have kept the best until this hour!"

This bantering allusion to drinkers who dull the edge of their taste by overmuch indulgence — the familiar hint anent the usual excesses at other wedding banquets, where there is not (just as here there was) permeating the feeling of all a sense of some Divine influence present amongst them — all this shows that the supposition arrived at by the master of the entertainment was that the young host had wished to surprise the company agreeably. But at once, to his amazement, the latter was made aware that a wondrous deed had been accomplished. His eyes turned to the servers, to Mary. Then in a few words all was disclosed. Jesus had performed His first miracle.

He did it to console a few Galileans, whose very names still remain unknown, and in order to sanctify the bond of marriage, which was to become, in His Church, a sacramental union. He did it to teach the world, which gives its best at first and leaves the dregs at the bottom of the cup, that the Christ would not so deal with us — that He would reserve for eternity that wine of the elect which will inebriate us with holy raptures. And finally, He did it at the prayer

of Mary, whose faith, thus tested by a first refusal, shone out in its strength only the more triumphantly.

"Here then took place," the Evangelist adds,[20] "the first sign given by Jesus, being given at Cana in Galilee; and thus He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." This word "sign" tells us what the miracles of the Saviour were for John — the manifestation of His divinity. Elsewhere he goes so far as to call them the "works" of the Christ, as if prodigies were but the natural attribute of Him, in Whom resideth almighty powers, and that the real miracle would be, not for God, whose name is Wonderful, to do wondrous things, but for Him not to do them. And so the miracles which Jesus will work beneath our eyes should only be for us as signs and tokens, as the lustrous rays of His divinity piercing through the veils of the flesh. In those moments which will sometimes come upon us, when the humiliations of the Word Incarnate do well-nigh shake our faith, and force from us that cry of bewilderment: "Why, what is there Godlike in all this?" then at once the answer should spring to our lips: "His miracles declare His might; and in these flashes of power He stands forth revealed, as in the fierce white glare of the lightning, the almighty Son of God." [21]

CHAPTER VI

GENESARETH

What was it that occurred at Nazareth when Jesus returned thither? The Gospel does not tell; but apparently something happened which rendered any tarrying in this village either painful or perilous for the Saviour, since Saint John adds immediately: "After that, He descended to Capharnaum with His Mother, His brothers, and His disciples." [1] The uncouth violence of the Nazarenes was proverbial. Perhaps they refused to see anything but a clever imposture in the miracle of Cana, and so would force this "son of Joseph" to take Himself out of their country.[2]

From Nazareth to Capharnaum is about a day's journey, which, as indeed may be inferred from Saint John's expression, is only a long descent down the slopes of the hills of Zabulon. The traveller reaches the end of his road, when, on coming out of the Valley of Doves (Ouadi el-Hamâm), he beholds at his feet the Sea of Galilee. The long and narrowing outlines of the lake's formation, with the rippling of its waters, suggested the idea of a harp, from which the Hebrews gave it the name Chinnereth. In the time of Jesus it was often called the Sea of Tiberias; or again, the Lake of Genesareth, from the plain, which bloomed and flowered like a garden-bed, encircling its shores. The Jews, in their admiration for this beautiful sheet of water, hold that the Lord once said: "Seven lakes have I created, yet but one of them have I reserved unto myself — the Lake of Genesareth." But the renown of this lake rests not so much upon its

20 John ii. 11. 1 John ii. 12. 2 Luke iv. 22.
21 Pascal.

beauty as upon our memories of Jesus. Here everything recalls the Master — the waves over which His bark furrowed its way; the fertile banks along which He wandered; the rich harvest-fields; the seabeach where He was so often to be found seated, sometimes in solitude, sometimes surrounded by the listening throngs. In the distance you may still see those same bleak, bare mountain peaks which were the lonely watchmen at His hours of prayer. There is no region which was witness to a greater number of His prodigies, nor one that hearkened for a longer period to His heavenly accents; thereby it is too endeared to all Christian hearts to pass over without striving to bring up a picture of it in our minds.

The Lake of Genesareth is one of the three deep basins which are filled by the waters of the Jordan, on its course to the south. Though it stretches out to a greater width than the Marsh of Houleh, yet it has not the dimensions of that sea of pitch into which the Jordan empties its waters; but in the epoch of the Christ the two lakes formed an astonishing contrast. Everything round about the one was teeming with life — its clear depths so well stocked with fish, its outlying lands lovely with flowers and fruit; while over and about the other there lay a horror as of death — with its sluggish sulphurous flow, with no living creature in its floods of bitumen, with its blasted and riven banks. Nevertheless, each of these wide expanses of plain and water, now so different of aspect, had once rivalled one another in fertility. When from the highlands of Bethel, Lot looked down on the Lake of Sodom and the Vale of Siddim, he found them both equally grateful and pleasant to the sight, even as the gardens of the Lord and the banks of the Nile.[3]

There were, in fact, the same causes which could not but have produced an equal fertility; for indeed these two seas are nothing but craters of extinct volcanoes, sunken so far within the burning soil that the Jordan, after entering the Lake of Genesareth, ranges to a depth of a hundred and ninety-one metres below the level of the Mediterranean.

In such low-lying lands the earth, warmed by a sky of fire, while it is refreshed with abundant waters, clothes the fields with every variety of plant, "The walnut, a tree of colder regions, here springs up majestic, while the palm-tree bends beneath its load of fruit, as in the torrid zones. At their side products of the temperate climes here thrive and flourish — the grape, the fig, and the olive. It seems as if Nature had reversed all her laws to gather together in these places everything she has to offer which could present the most striking contrast — those which in their native habits are the most opposite. The different seasons here dispute with one another for the sway, and exert their influence simultaneously. Figs and grapes ripen, without intermission, during ten months, and the other fruits never are damaged by any season of the year." [4]

In this picture it is easy to recognise the touch of a Galilean, proud of his fatherland and its beautiful lake. There is not a particle of exaggeration in it, however; for even in our days, only let the Bedouins cease from their ravagings for a season, and the traveller will still find the palm-trees overshadowing the

3 Gen. xiii. 10. 4 Josephus.

Lake of Tiberias; in the meadows of Magdala he will see the indigo, the lotus, and sugar cane, while all around the lake still gleams a crimson girdle of laurel-roses.

With no less complacency does Josephus boast of the fecundity of the waters. The fish were so abundant that the fishermen living along its banks could be counted by the hundred; there were even two villages bearing the name of Bethsaïda (the Fishery House). Therefore, ever since the partition of Judea among the sons of Israel, the right of casting nets into the lake had been reserved, as the common privilege of each and every inhabitant, by a law of Moses. In the time of Jesus thousands of bright sails sparkled over the sea: there were Roman galleys, Herod's fine fleet, and fishermen's craft in plenty. Today, there are only three boats, which lie almost unused by the indolent seamen of Tiberias and Mejdel.

So it was, too, with the cities of the lake; today lying in ruins, formerly so busy and populous. They were mostly dotted in a close line along the western shore; for on the eastern side the scarped and steep cliffs, rising from the water's edge make the shore inaccessible, except by way of the gorges, through which rush the mountain torrents in the winter season. Of all these towns the city of Tiberias was the most famous. Herod Antipas had only recently founded it, in honour of his protector Tiberias, and with such sumptuosity of architecture and ornament as the tastes which he had cultivated during his sojourn in Rome now prompted. However, in his contempt for all Judaic customs, he had erected his capitol upon the site of an ancient cemetery; and by so doing had closed its portals so far as the Jews were concerned, for they could not enter therein without contamination.[5] It was useless for him to multiply his solicitations, his favours, his privileges; he never triumphed over the scruples of his people. Tiberias still remained, for the most part, a city of foreigners — Greeks and Romans, who were charmed with a residence more pagan than Jewish in tone and aspect, with the gilded palace of Antipas, his amphitheatre, and the warm baths of the ancient Ammaüs. It is more than probable that Jesus never entered the gates of this city, and only from afar did He look upon its snowy ramparts and palaces of marble.

To the north of Tiberias the hill-ranges approach nearer to the shores; and the highway, climbing along a cliff, follows its trend for an hour or so, until it comes out upon the plain of Genesareth. There the heights, sweeping back from the sea once more, form a standard amphitheatre encircling those fields, which the Talmud calls the Paradise of Earth. Genesareth is no longer the fair and fragrant garden through which Jesus wandered long ago; yet now, in its desolation, it still bears delicate traces of its former fertility — in the spring-time covered with flowers, with thickets of laurel-roses overshadowing its brooks, while the thistles round about grow to be a veritable coppice, through which it is with difficulty that the traveller can tear a passageway.

It is to the streams of water which have been so lavishly granted it, that Genesareth owes her garment of flowers. In the south there is "Round Foun-

5 Num. xix. 11.

tain" (Aïn Medaouarah); in the north, the Springs of the Figtree (Aïn et-Tin); in the centre, a stream (which is, in fact, a river) falls sparkling from the millwheel of Shoucheh, and gliding through a thousand channels, moistens the fields along their course to the lake. It seems as if even this wealth of waters was not thought sufficient to freshen Genesareth, for athwart the barrier cliff which rises over the northern part of the plain an aqueduct has been channelled out to divert this way the waters of Aïn Tabigah.

Still farther on the banks present a different scene: here the hillsides slope gently down to the lake, while all strong winds are warded off by the thick clumps of caper-trees, tamarisks, and laurels. But on the summit of the hills and on the farther side of these mountains, there is nothing beside barren and scant pasturages, where a stony surface of basalt stares one in the face.

Such is the general landscape of the country bordering the western shores of the lake. From Tiberias to the outlet of the Jordan, it forms a curve of nearly four leagues; and it is here that the towns made famous by the Gospel are to be found — Magdala, Capharnaum, Bethsaïda and Chorozaïn.

The first named is the only one of these cities which can be easily located. The desolate little village of Mejdel, situated at the southern extremity of the plain of Genesareth, still retains the name of Magdala — the native place of the Magdalene, from whom Jesus drove seven devils, and who in gratitude for her deliverance followed Him even to the foot of the Cross.

It is more difficult to discover any traces of Capharnaum, "the city of Jesus." [6] Geographers sometimes locate it to the south, in the Plain of Genesareth, close by Round Fountain (Aïn Medaouarah); sometimes in the north, in the vicinity of the Figtree Spring (Aïn et-Tin); sometimes even in Tell Houm, near the outlet of the Jordan. The latter is only chosen for the reason that in its neighbourhood are some beautiful ruins, and in its name is contained the last syllable of Capharnaum. Aïn Medaouarah, on the other hand, is too distant from the lake to be regarded as the site of Capharnaum, "on the seashore"; [7] and furthermore, in the neighbouring parts there are no remains of any such ruined town. While, on the contrary, to the south of Aïn et-Tin rise two masses of ruins, one of which gives certain indications of being a tomb, while far and near as far as Ouadi el-Amoud the ground is strewn with stones and ruins. It is in this locality that, in harmony with the most ancient traditions, we have placed Capharnaum; for this position alone (or so it seems to us) answers to the descriptions of it in the Gospel — lying in the Plain of Genesareth, close by the lake, within the borders of Zabulon and Nephthali,[8] and upon the high-road of the caravans which, coming from the East and from Damascus, would descend by this route into Egypt.

Yet, after all, it matters little enough what opinion one may cherish as to these geographical questions; for, however, uncertain we are as to the precise spot whereon the Christ made His abode, at least we know in what places He dwelt. It is with perfect assurance that we hold the plain of Genesareth in veneration,

6 Matthew ix. 1. 7 Matt. iv. 13. 8 Matt. xiv. 34; Mark vi. 53; John vi. 17.

since Jesus once trod its paths; here His bark came to land when He left the opposite shore; just here too the little boat was pushed out from land at that time when, the crowds becoming so great about Him, the Master would so order it that all might hear some one of those parables over which the world will meditate to the end of time. Somewhere, too, above those meadow-lands which today, lie untilled, stood in those days the synagogue where Jesus healed the demoniac; there too was the residence of Jaïrus, with that of the centurion to whom He gave back his faithful servant; the dwelling where Simon's mother-in-law lay in all the languors and pains of fever.[9] Matthew the publican had his tollgatherer's office on "the highway which skirts the sea," [10] close by that caravansary whose ruins are still visible at Khan Miniëh.

Past the promontory which shuts in the plain of Genesareth on the north, crossing over a sandy beach strewn with seashells, Jesus would find Bethsaïda the native-place of His disciples Peter, Andrew, Philip, James, and John. Aïn Tabigah today marks its site for us; for Saint Matthew speaks of this village as being on the border of the lake, between Capharnaum and Chorozaïn; [11] and Saint Mark,[12] adds that it was near Genesareth. Now Aïn Tabigah is separated from the plain only by a little headland; further on, along the shore, there are no traces of any habitations until we come to Tell Houm, and we are presuming that Tell Houm is Chorozaïn. While, furthermore, there is no position which could have answered better for a fisherman's hamlet. Here they had a bay sheltered from the winds; there are the mouths of numberless little streams also, whose fall would draw thither great runs of fish; and there was too a smooth strand, on which they could beach their boats. It was here that Jesus was walking when he called the sons of Jonas and Zebedee to Him; it is here that He went aboard of Simon's bark, and miraculously filled his nets to overflowing.[13]

We have said that Tell Houm appears to locate the whereabouts of Chorozaïn. This region, in fact, is where we find the ruins most numerous — great columns lying along the ground, the remains of a synagogue which was without a rival in all Palestine. Big blocks of stone whereon the eyes of Jesus rested once are still scattered about the foot of the hills, which, from Aïn Tabigah to the outlet of the Jordan, form a graceful border about the Sea of Tiberias.

Genesareth, Capharnaum, Bethsaïda, Chorozaïn — or, in a word, the western shore of the lake, in length about three or four leagues, formed therefore the field chosen for the Ministry of Jesus. This region was the most populous of all Palestine, and nowhere else would the Saviour have found that commingling of races, manners, religions, sects, which made it well deserve its name of Galilee of the Gentiles. Officers of the court of Herod, Greeks from Decapolis, countrymen, fishers, Galileans, courtesans whom contact with the pagan cities had corrupted, Syrians, Phœnicians, Orientals, whose caravans were following down "the road that runs along the borders of the sea," soldiers, Roman centurions, set to watch over these tumultuous lands, publicans seated by the highway to collect

9 Mark i. 21–26, v. 22–43; Luke vii. 1 11, iv. 38.
10 Mark ii. 13, 14.
11 Matt. xi. 21–23.
12 Mark vi. 45, 53.
13 Matt. iv. 18–22; Luke v. 1–11.

taxes,[14] — made up of such a motley multitude was the populace through which Jesus passed, and which He was soon to draw after Him.

Then too, as there was no one central point from which His renown could have spread abroad so swiftly throughout all Syria, so also there was no place which offered Him more secure retreats in seasons either of weariness or of danger. In a few hours a boat could bear him to the mountain fastnesses of Gaulanitis, amid whose solitudes He often consecrated whole days and nights to prayer. A three hours' walk from the lake in a northerly direction would bring Him into the kingdom of a just and mild prince, the Tetrach Philip. Jesus had only to cross the frontier, should it be needful to shield Himself from any blow from Herod; and He did more than once take this precaution, for that listless monarch had intervals of bloodthirsty activity. On these occasions we shall see Jesus taking refuge near to the other Bethsaïda-in-the-North where Philip had taken up his abode.[15] But these periods of absence were of short duration; as soon as Herod had fallen back into his usual indolent mood Jesus would return to His chosen land of Genesareth.

Thus from the testimony of olden times we have tried to rehabilitate that countryside just as it was when long ago Jesus saw and loved it. Today the traveller coming down to the borderlands about the Sea of Tiberias, with his fancy filled with such memories as these, would be sadly undeceived. The green pastures, the vines, and the orchards have disappeared; the flourishing towns are only heaps of ruins; jackals slink about the synagogue of Tell Houm, where Jesus taught; the few thorny thickets do not suffice to temper the great heats within these hollow spaces, and the air which one breathes fairly burns with the dry glow. The lake indeed still shimmers in the sunlight between the long lines of hills, as clear and as calm as it was of old; it reflects the same horizon and the same sky. And yet all that the scene has lost in grace and in beauty it has gained in savage majesty, nay more, in eloquence, in sooth; for this sea aforetime, so brilliant with life, and now doomed to the desolation of death, must recall great thoughts to all who wander about the solitary stretches of sand along its shores today — thoughts which remind us how terrible it is to reject the word of God and incur His anathemas.

"Woe to thee Chorozaïn! [16] woe to thee, Bethsaïda! for if Tyre and Sidon had beheld such miracles wrought among them as have been worked in your midst, they would have done penance long since in sackcloth and ashes. This is why I say to you that Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment shall be dealt with more mercifully than shall you. And thou, Capharnaum, wouldst thou lift thyself up to the heavens? Thou shalt be humbled down to Hell; for if the miracles which have been done in thee had been wrought in Sodom, she would perchance be living even to this day. This is why I say to thee, in the day of Judgment, the land of Sodom shall be dealt with more mercifully than shalt thou."

14 Matt. iv. 24. 15 Matt. xiv. 12, 13; Luke ix. 10. 16 Matt. xi. 21–24.

BOOK THIRD

FIRST YEAR OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

The Schismatics' Testimony

"Come, see a Man Who has told me everything that I have done! Is not this THE CHRIST?"

. . . And they said to the woman: "Not because of your tale do we now believe; for we ourselves have heard Him and know that this Man is truly THE CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD" (Saint John, iv. 29, 42).

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST PASCH IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

I. The Hucksters Driven From the Temple

John ii. 12–25

The first sojourn of Jesus at Capharnaum was of short duration.[1] However at that time He manifested His power by the tone of authority which thrilled in His speech and by His miracles, insomuch that only a little later we shall hear the Nazarenes uttering their reproach: "Do some of the great works like those which you performed in Capharnaum here in your own country!" [2] We do not know what deeds these were, whose renown had been spread throughout Galilee; no one of the evangelists has given us any particulars in regard to them, and we are forced to resign ourselves to the bare knowledge of their occurrence, as must be inferred from Saint Luke's allusion to them.

Hardly had the Saviour awakened Capharnaum to a knowledge of His presence by these miracles when He withdrew from their countryside. The caravans which go up to the Pasch were being formed just at this time, collected from all the lands bordering on the lake. Jesus joined company with the pilgrims of Galilee.

Apparently they took the route through Perea, and arrived in Jerusalem by way of Bethany and the Mount of Olives. There was nothing at that time to distinguish Him from the crowd of Jews about Him — neither the testimony of the Precursor, which was almost forgotten by this, nor the miracles wrought in Capharnaum, since no report of them had up to this date reached Jerusalem; the Saviour entered the Holy City unknown, unnoticed, and with nothing to mark Him out from the throng. His first act was to go up to the Temple to pray; but it was useless for Him to seek any place on the holy hill for silent adoration; for He being a son of Juda, might not penetrate within the porches

1 John ii. 12. 2 Luke iv. 23.

of the Levites; He must remain with His tribe without in the lower courts; but just now and all during the feasts this part of the Sanctuary was given over to the merchants, and was thus profaned by an unhallowed traffic.

This abuse, unheard of before the Captivity, had crept in since the period when the Jews, who had been dispersed over the whole world, thronged into Jerusalem for the Passover. As they could not bring with them from those far distant lands the animals necessary for the sacrifices, it happened that for a long while the small number of victims was in disgraceful contrast with the multitude of worshippers. To guard against this dearth of oblations, one of Herod's favourite courtiers, Bava, son of Bota, gathered thither great flocks of sheep, and generously offered them to the sons of Israel! What he had done prompted by liberality others continued to do from motives of selfish interest. The priests were greatly in favour of these enterprises, whence they derived numerous perquisites! Protected by their political influence, the sellers soon slipped into every avenue of the Temple and all through the Porches of the Gentiles, turning that vast court into a market, where was set out for sale every requisite for the service of the altars — cages full of doves intended for the offerings of the poor; herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, for richer customers. Indeed, it was not alone the paschal lamb which had to be immolated at this season; the Jews of the Dispersion, since they came to Jerusalem but once a year, were obliged to wait until this visit to make presentation of such victims as were required of them, either according to the prescriptions of the Law, or in fulfilment of some pious vow. And it must be remembered how innumerable these sacrifices were in order to conceive a just idea of the tumult, which was aggravated by the presence of the money-changers. Seated at their tables, these bankers of the lower classes provided every one with the half-shekel which he must pay "as the price of his soul"; [3] and this because the greater part of the visiting Jews, having come from Roman provinces, would have in hand only moneys stamped with idolatrous images, and therefore unworthy of being offered to the Lord.

Necessary as this traffic may have seemed, it profaned the house of God. Certainly the victims were always immolated and the rites celebrated upon the topmost terraces; but the chanting and the prayers were no longer audible in the lower courts; shrill cries, incessant bellowings, coin rattling upon the trays of the noisy brokers, a confused rabble of pilgrims and hucksters, with their beasts lying about the mosaic pavement of the porches as though it were the litter of their stables. This was what Jesus must needs hear and see within the very shadow of the Sanctuary.

The spectacle aroused His wrath; seizing a handful of those flexible rushes which Orientals plate together like cords, He twisted them into a whip, and advanced, all suddenly, with uplifted arm, beating before Him both buyers and sellers, cattle and sheep. Nor were the coin-changers spared; He put them all without the gates, overturning their tables and scattering their piles of money upon the ground. The sellers of doves were less rudely treated; forasmuch as they sold the offerings made by the poor, they merited the Saviour's pity; there-

3 Exod. xxx. 11–16.

fore he did not touch their cages, but was content to say, simply: "Take all these away from here, and do not make a house of traffic out of My Father's house." [4] What must have been the astonishment of the first disciples at the sight of Jesus in His indignation and the multitude flying before Him! Yet some of them remembered that it was written: "The zeal of Thy House hath eaten Me up." [5] Thus their faith was only the more strengthened.

As for the throng, it offered no resistance at all but scattered like the startled sheep before the lash of Jesus. More than once in the annals of Israel the prophets had disclosed themselves in like manner, clad in shepherd garb, or as a hardy mountaineer, or other such man of the people; and further, all the while they were dishonouring the holy places the Jews knew themselves guilty of sin, and hence they were the more disposed to receive this Voice, ringing out in denunciation of their disorderly conduct, as inspired of God. Though the usurers and merchants may have cursed the vindicator of the Temple's sanctity in secret and cast upon Him dark scowls of hatred, still none of them dared to face Him, Who had driven them out in the Name of Jehovah.

Much less could the scribes, or even the priests themselves (however much to their interest it was to condemn the Galilean), much less could they summon up the necessary courage, so conscious were they of the righteousness of His rage. But as soon as they had recovered from their surprise they came to the Christ and demanded: "What sign He had to show as His warrant for an action of this sort?"

"Overthrow this Temple," Jesus answered, "and in three days I will raise it up again." [6] The thought concealed under these words escaped them; they only understood them in their literal signification, and thus saw simply an announcement of the destruction of this sanctuary, whose splendour was one source of their overweening pride. The enormous blocks of stone, the tessellated mosaics, the precious metals, the silver, the gold, the brass, now blended in beautiful brilliancy before their eyes — in a word, their Temple, the wonder of the world, a Galilean dared to talk to them of levelling and rebuilding this splendid fabric with so much ease! The work which Herod, having at his disposal all the treasures of India, was forty-six years in constructing, this royal task a poor artisan boasted that he could accomplish in three days! The saying made such an impression upon the Jews that ever after they kept repeating it; in the last hours of Jesus' life they related it before the Sanhedrin, as a blasphemy and the capital crime of the Saviour; but not content with making a simple accusation of it, they took care to distort it after this fashion: "I can destroy this Temple of God, and in three days I will rebuild it." [7] Now note what Jesus really said: "Destroy this Holy of Holies" [8] (as you have done by your faithlessness and corruption), "and in three days I will reestablish it." "He spoke of the Temple of His body," the Holy of Holies of the New Testament, which after three days He would rescue from the tomb. In His wording He merely made use of

4 John ii. 16.
5 John ii. 17; Ps. lxviii. 10.
6 John ii. 18.
7 Matt. xxvi. 61.
8 John ii. 19.

the enigmatic spirit so familiar to the Oriental thought when they wish to give only a hint of their real meaning.

No one understood Him then. "What!" cried out the Jews. "Forty-six years has this Temple been a-building, and you say that in three days you will reconstruct it!" and they retired in impatient contempt of such presumption. The disciples themselves, without partaking of the Jews' incredulity, did not comprehend all that this response of the Master implied; "but after the Resurrection, they remembered what He had said, and they believed in the Scripture,[9] and in the word of Jesus."

"While He was" [10] at this time "in Jerusalem, for the festival of the Passover, many believed in His Name, seeing the signs which He did. But Jesus did not confide Himself to them, because He knew them all, and because He had no need that any one tender unto Him the testimony of man; for He, of Himself, knew what there is in man." The Gospel does not declare what prodigies the Saviour performed during those days. Certainly they must have been of a striking character to attract to Him suddenly such a host of disciples; but their faith was only rooted in self-interest and ambition, and thus the Lord "did not intrust Himself to them" as he did to the Galileans. Having read their hearts, He put no confidence in these new-comers.

II. Nicodemus

John iii. 1–21

Among the Jews, attracted at that time by the word of the Lord, there was a member of the Sanhedrin named Nicodemus, a rich man, influential in Jerusalem, who was possessed of a high order of intelligence as well as the distinction of noble rank. He, without doubt, had been one of the few Pharisees who had humbled themselves before John the Baptist and received his ablution; for we shall hear Jesus reminding him "of that baptism of water and the Spirit" foretold by the Percursor.[11] However, it was not what he had seen on the banks of the Jordan, but the wondrous deeds done in Jerusalem, which had decided him to believe in Jesus.[12] Prompted by grace, he was made desirous of a closer intimacy; and as he dared not take any such step openly, he stole by night to the house where the Lord was to be found.

Nicodemus opened the conversation with a tribute to Jesus: "Rabbi," he said, "we know,[13] that you are a master come from God, for no man can do the prodigies which you do if God be not with him."

However respectful he was in tendering this acknowledgement, the scribe only rendered it to Jesus as to a man and a doctor like himself; but the Saviour knew Nicodemus's heart. He saw that the man was secretly stirred by strong feeling, eager to be enlightened, as to that Kingdom of Heaven which John Baptist had announced; and so, without prolonging his suspense, He made

9 John ii. 22.
10 John ii. 23–25.
11 John i. 33, iii. 5.
12 John iii. 2.
13 John iii. 2.

known to him at once that the reign of the Messiah so far transcends all human understanding that nothing less than the putting on of a new life can enable man to have part in it:

"Of a truth I say to you, if a man be not born anew [14] he has no share in the Kingdom of God."

The idea of the new birth, in the spiritual sense, was no novel or unheard-of conception in the doctrine of the Scribes; for they had often compared the proselyte to a new-born child. That a pagan must first take upon himself a new life in order to be of the seed of Abraham — no idea could be more in conformity with their beliefs than this; but that this obligation extended even to the sons of Israel was indeed a strange and new thought to Nicodemus.

"How," he exclaimed, "can one be born again when he has already grown old? Must he reenter the womb of his mother to emerge thence once more?"

The Saviour proceeded to explain His thoughts so badly comprehended: "Of a truth, aye, of a truth," [15] he repeated, "if he be not born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

To be immersed in water in token of purification was a rite known among the Jews; and John had already proclaimed that though he plunged them in water, which was without virtue in itself, yet after him there was to be an ablution of the Holy Ghost; that is to say, the spirit of God would vivify this water of ours, that thus it might renew the heart of man. Therefore it was not within the womb of his mother, but into the streams of sanctifying grace, that Nicodemus must enter in order to attain unto the life which is from on high.

Jesus did not stop there; from this baptismal regeneration He stripped away whatever the carnal fancy might suggest: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," He proceeded; [16] "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; be not astonished, therefore if you" — born according to the flesh and dead through sin — "if you must be born again." Then, in order to give Nicodemus some idea of the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Saviour added: "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear its voice, but you know not whence it comes nor whither it goes; so it is with him who is born of the Spirit."

This similitude was wonderfully apt; for the wind is akin to the Spirit, of which it is the symbol. It may be at that very hour, while Jesus and Nicodemus were conversing there, the murmuring of the night wind made itself heard; or it may be that the Saviour had in mind those light airs which spring up even at midday in fine weather. No one knows aught of their origin; you can scarcely feel their soft breath on your cheek. They only betray their presence by a gentle rustling amongst the leaves. Most like to this is the action of the Holy Ghost in the supernatural life. It bloweth where it listeth; without hindrance it worketh, nor is it subject to fixed times nor to constant laws. At its first touches we do not know whence it comes nor whither it goes; only it makes us feel its nearness, makes us hear its voice, then suddenly it departs, and leaves behind it within our hearts nothing but languor and silence, and thus it goeth and returneth by secret ways. All that the soul may know of it is that sometimes she

14 John iii. 3. 15 John iii. 5–7. 16 John iii. 6–8.

feels its presence near her, and then she rejoices; sometimes she must weep its absence.

These workings of the Spirit of God could not have been unknown to Nicodemus. He himself without doubt had had experience of them in his inner life, and he had found them written down in the Psalms and the sapiential writings, where so many pious souls have recounted the ways of God within them. Therefore when Nicodemus answered once again: "How can this be done?" Jesus showed some surprise.

"Are you a master in Israel,[17] and yet you are ignorant of these things? Of a truth, I say unto you: We speak that which We know, We give testimony of the things which We have seen, and Our testimony man is not willing to receive. If you believe Me not when I speak of the things of earth, how will you believe Me of the things of Heaven?"

By "the things of earth" Jesus referred to all that He had been saying regarding baptism; since the sacred rite, so far as its external forms are concerned, has a terrestrial side which appeals to the senses. By "the things of Heaven" He alluded to the lessons that still remained to be given to the world — His celestial origin, His cross, raised aloft like the serpent in the wilderness [18] in order to save men, the salvation promised to those who believe in Him, the judgment and condemnation of the unbelieving.[19]

"And behold," the Saviour concluded, "the cause of this judgment! It is because the Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness better than the Light, because their works were evil. For he who does evil hates the Light, and he comes not near it, for fear lest his works be discovered. But he who does the truth comes to the Light that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God."

Uttered, as apparently they were, upon the threshold of the dwelling, just at the moment when Nicodemus was taking his leave, while already the dawn was lighting up the eastern sky, these words sound like a last exhortation, whereby Jesus would conjure this doctor of the Sanhedrin not to draw away from Him. But the rabbi, though qualified to discuss with the Christ upon such lofty themes, was yet of a cowardly soul: he would rather steal away from the insistent promptings of grace within; and though he believed deep down in his heart, he would still strive to let nothing be seen. During the whole period of the Saviour's ministry we shall look in vain for Nicodemus in the number of the disciples; only once [20] we shall hear him in the Sanhedrin essaying a timid speech in favour of Jesus, then, as if this feeble effort had exhausted his courage, he disappears, until amid the shadows of Calvary we meet him again, at the very last, close by the lifeless Body of his God.

17 John iii. 9–12.
18 John iii. 13–18.
19 John iii. 19–21.
20 John vii. 50, 51.

CHAPTER II

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S LAST TESTIMONY

John iii. 22–36, iv. 1–2; Matt. iv. 12, xiv. 3–5; Mark i. 14, vi. 17–20; Luke iii. 19–20

The interview with Nicodemus is the only one among all the incidents of this Passover as to which we have any particulars. The faith of the Jews of Jerusalem, so ready and strong in outward seeming, was not to bear any fruit; this Jesus well knew. And so, quitting the town shortly, He went with His Galilean disciples into "the land of Judea." [1] This name was assigned to all the outlying territory about Jerusalem, and especially to the mountainous country which extends to the south. In fact, in a northern direction, it is but a few hours' walk to the confines of Samaria; to the east and west the city is surrounded by wild and rocky ravines, which on one side are channelled down to the shores of the Mediterranean, and on the other, straight to the uninhabited banks of the Jordan; so then it is principally to the south that we must look for the Judea to which Jesus consecrated the first year of His ministry.

During eight months He travelled over this region; indeed, He went even as far as Idumea, whence, as Saint Mark relates, He drew after Him some faithful disciples. However, it does not follow that we are to conclude that the Saviour penetrated into the mountain districts of that land; for the *ouadis* with their valleys, which reach from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf, Mount Hor, Petra, and its tombs — these were now no longer in the land of Israel, but in that of Esau. The Idumea of the Gospel, doubtless only included that part of Judea which extends south of Hebron, and which had belonged since the time of the Machabees to the kingdom of Edom. We do not know through what various ways Jesus journeyed in that southern land, but He could not have failed to visit ancient Hebron, where the Patriarchs were buried; nor the great oaks of Mambre beneath which Abraham pitched his tent, and there knew the presence of Jehovah near unto him; nor the birthplace of His Percursor, the humble village of Youttah; nor Kerioth, from which came Judas who betrayed him.

However arid and mountainous were these countries, still Jesus could find there the water necessary for the immersion of His penitents; for "He baptised — not Himself but by the ministrations of his disciples." [2] For many a day has the discussion been prolonged as to the nature of this baptism. Some of the ancient Fathers, assimilating it with John the Baptist's ablutions, consider it as a mode of initiation, the ordering of which the Christ intrusted to His faithful Galileans. But for the most part commentators concur in regarding it as the Sacrament which regenerates the soul; and they believe that if Jesus did not administer it Himself, it was to denote that the sacred rite has in itself a divine efficacy.

1 John iii. 22. 2 John iv. 2.

Remembering what was the prize which they of this new birth attained unto, we may not suppose that the Saviour would make use of it so freely as did John with his ablutions in the Jordan. He enlightened these first converts as to the virtues of baptism — demanded of them an uprightness of heart, and unlimited self-sacrifice, and faith in the truths He had revealed to them; but there these first teachings stopped, for though before this Jesus had unfolded the plan of Redemption to Nicodemus, as yet He did not deal after the same manner with the common people. We know from Saint Matthew and Saint Mark what was the burden of His sermons at this period, and we hear, as it were, an echo of the message which John had brought them: "Do penance, for the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is nigh." [3] The design of the Christ, by at first simply repeating the words of His Precursor, was to confirm the mission of His Prophet, waiting the time to disclose His whole doctrine, when He could do so freely in Galilee. Therefore, as He was even then an object for the scribes' jealous suspicions, He was content to purify the hearts of numberless sons of Juda, by gaining them unto the Kingdom of the Messiah which was so near at hand.

In this same interval, apparently, occurred "that difference upon the subject of the purification" [4] which Saint John recounts. The heats of summer had so far shrunken the waters of the Jordan that it became difficult to perform any ablutions along the banks of the stream. So John the Baptist withdrew from Bethbara, and ascending the valley as far as the ford of Succoth tarried there, near by the village Salim, at a place called Œnon, because of its copious springs. Beyond the necessity of seeking a spot better adapted for baptism, there was also, animating his thought in seeking this retreat, a desire to yield place to Him for Whom the Precursor had come to prepare the way.

But although they flocked around Jesus, they still came to John; and the latter continued to baptise, joyfully gleaning after the footsteps of the Saviour in fields where hitherto he had harvested all alone. But his disciples, on the contrary, incapable of such self-forgetfulness as this, saw with secret vexation that their master's glory was being obscured just as that of the Newcomer increased. Something soon occurred to make them give vent to their envy.

It was but a little while before the imprisonment [5] of the Precursor: "They had entered into a dispute with a Jew upon the subject of purification. Undoubtedly the latter, enlightened by Jesus, refused to admit the efficacy of the earlier baptism. Up sprang at once a contest which gave John's disciples an occasion of manifesting their jealousy. They referred to the Baptist finally, and said to him: "Rabbi, he who was with you beyond Jordan, and to whom you rendered your testimony, behold now he baptises, and all men are coming to him."

What sadness underlies these complaints — the very name of Jesus suppressed designedly, as though they remember how the Christ had been drawn from obscurity by this very man whose brilliant renown He now has eclipsed! Overcome with envy, and valuing not at all the penitents that were still at-

3 Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 15. 4 John iii. 22, 23. 5 John iii. 24-26.

tracted to Œnon: "All men are going to him!" they said. But John, while mitigating the bitterness of their feeling, did not fail to render homage to the divine Master once more, by setting forth more clearly the limits of his own mission marked out for him from on high.

"Man," he said, "can have nothing which is not given him from Heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I have said: 'I am not the Christ, but I am sent before Him.'" [6]

Then, in order to explain better what his true position was in relation to Jesus, he borrowed from the Prophets the figure by which he compared the Saviour to a bridegroom, of whom Israel is the spouse. What Jehovah had been unto His chosen people, this the Word, from that hour has become for all faithful souls.[7] The advent of the Messiah, the throngs following after Him, typify the marriage festival, and the wedding procession which joyously conducts the Spouse unto Christ. But as for him, the friend of Jesus, he must needs be glad and rejoice in His glory. "He Who hath the bride [8] is the bridegroom," he said, "but the friend of the bridegroom, who is by His side, and listens to all, is transported with delight at the voice of the bridegroom; and thus it is that my joy is fulfilled. It is fitting that He should increase, and that I should diminish." Thus the Baptist concludes; and then, dwelling upon that brief sentence, he proceeds to compare himself to the Saviour, that so he might the more humble himself before Him.

Jesus comes from on high; John is of this earth.[9] He, John, has not seen that of which he bearest witness: he but accepts and delivers the message with which he is intrusted. Jesus has Himself seen all things, has heard all things, in the heavens; therefore He testifies nothing upon the belief of another; and nevertheless His testimony is not received, or rather, so pitiful is the number of those who accept it that the Baptist, kindling under the passion with which the vision stirred him, held this poor handful of souls as of no account! Then, reverting to his own mission,[10] severely straitened, like that of the ancient prophets, John contrasts it with the mission of the Christ, which is all-divine, sweeping over and beyond all bounds; for God meting out His gifts unto His Son in the measure of His love for Him, has lavished all things upon Him. "The Father loveth the Son, and placeth all things within His hands. He that believes in the Son has eternal life; he that believes not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

That wrath, whose thunders now threaten these disciples of the Baptist, reverberated more terribly still over the heads of haughty sinners. John never suppressed these outbursts. We have seen with what hardihood he menaced the great men of Israel at the outset of his ministry; and since then his zeal had been only the more aroused. No grandeur, no rank nor dignity, could act as a shield against his just rebukes. Herod Antipas very soon made proof of this.

By ascending the valley of the Jordan, the Precursor had drawn near to Galilee; scarcely had the licentiousness of its prince been made known to him

6 John iii. 27, 28.
7 Ezech. xvi. *passim;* Jerem. xxxi. 3; Osee ii. 19, xi. 4.
8 John iii. 29.
9 John iii. 31, 32.
10 John iii. 34–36.

before he bestirred himself to stigmatise it.[11] We know to what a pitch this tyrant had already carried his scandalous disorders. Casting aside his legitimate wife, daughter of Aretas, king of Petra, he lived with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.[12] This princess, famous among the descendants of Herod, was the daughter of that Aristobulus who was strangled at Sebaste by his father's orders; she was granddaughter of Mariamne, whose execution had ever after haunted the old king with bitter remorse. Being married to her uncle Philip, she found in her husband merely a disinherited son of Herod, living like an ordinary private personage. Such a commonplace condition as that to which this union reduced her seemed insupportable to her brilliant nature; beautiful, fiery, imperious, holding Judaism and its observances in supreme contempt, she was one who would rule at any cost. And so when Antipas, during a visit he once made with his brother, saw her and became enamoured of her, he had only to promise her his throne in order to ensnare her.

The daughter of Aretas, being warned that Herod was about to repudiate her, anticipated his action by retiring to the fortress of Macheronte, then among the possessions of her father, lying to the east of the Dead Sea. But it was all in vain that the king of Petra took up arms to avenge the wrong done his daughter; in vain also that his troops routed those of the tetrarch: the monstrous and unnatural union of Antipas and Herodias was consummated, despite all obstacles.

So shocking a transgression of the Law could not fail to excite the mind of all Galilee. Did Herod, startled as he was, and fearful of some disturbance among his people, come to John the Baptist, thinking to obtain from him some words of approval and commendation? Some writers have so interpreted the facts. Yet it is more probable that the Precursor himself at once took the initiative. Pushing his way straight into the palace of the tetrarch — as of old Elias came before Achab — he made the gilded halls reecho with those words which the Church has so often since repeated to guilty princes: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." [13] And then John reproached him for all the evil deeds committed by him; whereupon having fulfilled his mission, he departed, leaving in Herod's heart a rankling memory, an incurable wound. The prince dared not arrest the Prophet on the instant, for he feared the people, who still thronged about him; but he was only waiting some favourable opportunity for laying hands upon him. As soon as it presented itself, he had him seized by his satellites, and from the Gospel account we may infer that the members of the Sanhedrin, always the secret enemies of the Baptist, were not entirely unconcerned in this act of violence. The prison in which John the Baptist was thrown was that same fortress of Macheronte where the daughter of Aretas has taken refuge. Josephus has described its strange appearance, erected upon one of the mountains which border the Dead Sea, while on the east it is surrounded by gorges so deep that the eye can scarcely fathom their dark chasms. Herod struck with the value of such a coign of vantage, had encircled the cliff

11 Mark vi. 17, 18.

12 The Herod Philip here alluded to should not be confounded with Philip, Tetrarch of Iturea, whose character and kingdom we have discussed elsewhere. (See page 44.)

13 Mark vi. 18.

with enormous ramparts, and raised upon the heights a town and a palace. Tales of unhallowed deeds gave the deep defiles which environ it an evil renown. The popular imagination, deluded by the volcanic phenomena which are of so frequent occurrence in this region, conjured up numberless prodigies which were to be beheld in these parts. The smallest plants (they said) here grow to the size of the figtree; great twisted roots, red as fire, sending out flames at evening, glide away from the profane hand that would grasp them, or strike him down in death. From the depths of the valleys, and from the summits of the mountains, there burst forth springs of most various flavours — sometimes boiling with heat, sometimes pouring out at the same time, as from a double vessel, icy streams mingling with the warm.

Such is the fantastic neighbourhood in which Josephus locates the prison of the Precursor. Although held within these fastnesses, the latter retained his liberty so far as to be able to receive his disciples, and to charge them with divers messages.[14] Herod himself, during his sojourns at Macheronte, sought converse with the captive; for "he feared him, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and although he kept him in prison, he listened to him willingly." [15] Thus he came "to do many things by his counsel"; and at the last did really halt for an instant, undecided, in the downward path of sin on which he had so far proceeded. But his wicked paramour was ever on the watch: she felt that the influence of John was ruinous to her own, and so, making a vow of merciless vengeance upon him, she went about procuring his death. For a long time Herod protected the Forerunner; for he was attached to him, and feared the people, who venerated John as a prophet. Such halfhearted resistance as this was however powerless to withstand Herodias. We shall see very soon how, in a night of debauchery, she snatched her victim from the hands which so feebly defended him.

CHAPTER III

THE SAMARITAN

Luke iv. 14; John iv. 4–42

Jesus having learned of the imprisonment of John the Baptist, retired into Galilee, not of His own desire, but "by the power of the Spirit"; [1] apparently this interior guide revealed some impending danger to Him, for John the Evangelist states that the Saviour was not free to choose what way He would take: "He was of necessity," he says, "to pass through Samaria." [2]

The frontier of this country was soon crossed, and toward the middle of the day Sichem appeared on the left, surrounded by rich meadow lands and gardens. Jesus did not push on as far as this; tired after the long foot travel, He Himself rested at the entrance of the valley wherein the town is situated, and hard by the well of Jacob. The disciples, however, proceeded on their way

14 Matt. xi. 2 et seq.; Luke vii. 18.
15 Mark vi. 19–20.
1 Luke iv. 14.
2 John iv. 4.

toward Sichem; for in the haste of their setting out not having made any provisions for a long journey, they now found themselves obliged to buy the necessities of life from Samaritans.

Jesus, left alone, sought shelter beneath the archway overhanging the well, and from this spot, as He sat gazing out over the valleys spread before Him, the scene may well have brought up memories of many ancient happenings in Israel. Here, under the oaks of Moreh,[3] Abraham had pitched his tent, and raised the first altar to Jehovah. Jacob, on his return from Mesopotamia, had bought this very land which Jesus now trod, and here too he had dug this well,[4] although there were fountains of water round about him, because he wished to be free from any subjection to the neighbouring domains. Still later, when his sons had rashly wiped out the dishonour of Dina in the blood of the Sichemites, the Patriarch, though obliged to flee, yet always retained such tender recollections of this valley that he bequeathed it to his dearly loved son.[5] Here also was the spot where Joseph was to be endowed with every blessing, showered upon him from the heavenly heights and rising from the depths below, while he himself would be upheld by the blessings of his fathers, whose God was forevermore to be his helper.[6] Here Ephraim, mindful of this same precious heritage, laid to rest the embalmed body of Joseph,[7] and so for centuries made Sichem the principal city of all Judea. Over yonder, upon the opposite slopes of Ebal and of Garizim, the eleven tribes, with solemn anathemas against all transgressors, had once vowed eternal fidelity to the Law.[8] At the foot of these very hills, for many long years, Israel had held her councils and courts of law; and when Sion was become the capital of Judea, we still find Roboam inaugurating his reign at Sichem.[9]

But what was there now remaining of these olden splendours? The hills and valleys of Ephraim had forfeited their ancient renown by taking the name of Samaria — a new town of schismatic tribes. The field of Jacob was now an unhallowed region, through which travellers passed in haste lest they should come in contact in any way with its inhabitants.[10] How deeply must not Jesus have grieved over such sad changes of faith as these! Thus, in weariness of body and of soul, He sank down upon the low curb of the well; a divine despair which Saint John pictures in one word, which it is impossible for us to translate: "He was seated after this manner by the well." The Church standing above the graves which she has blessed, loves to recall that mysterious lassitude:

> Quærens me sedisti lassus.
> Redimisti crucem passus:
> Tantus labor non sit cassus!

And very shortly there came up from the little city of Sichar the woman whom Jesus had come to seek at the cost of so great a weariness. She was a

3 Gen. xii. 6.
4 Gen. xxiii. 18–20.
5 Gen. xxxiv.
6 Gen. xlix. 25.
7 Josue xxiv. 32.
8 Deut. xxvii. 12, 13.
9 Josue xxiv. 1–25; 3 Kings xii. 1.
10 [The Samaritans were a race of strangers, originally planted in Palestine during the Assyrian Captivity. They gradually adopted much of the Jewish religion and ceremonial; but the Jews always treated them as idolators and devils that were supremely unclean. The Samaritans retaliated by attacking Jewish travellers; hence the mutual rancour and hatred.]

Samaritan, of evil life. With her slender jar poised upon her shoulder, she passed by all the springs nearer the town, and wandered up to Jacob's well — drawn thither by the freshness of its limpid supply, and by something perhaps of traditional respect for the Patriarch. In fact, women of the East do not often go out to draw water in the middle of the day; fearing to encounter some insult, they are never seen around the fountains, except in little companies, and at sunset. But this one had long since lost all timidity and reserve, and she approached the well without concerning herself about the presence there of a man.

"Give Me to drink," [11] was Jesus' quiet request of her.

The Samaritan looked at the Stranger; by His apparel and His accent she recognised a Judean.

"How," she said, "do you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, who am a Samaritan? The Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

It was a refusal, rendered the more offensive by its ironical tone; and to appreciate its harshness it must be remembered with what readiness even Bedouins proffer this blessed service to the thirsty traveller. Nothing could show plainer to what extremes the animosity of the two nations had been pushed.

To this unmannerly reply Jesus only uttered a gentle objection:

"If you knew [12] the gift of God," He said, "and Who it is that says to you: 'Give Me to drink,' perchance you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water."

This gift of God was grace, but the Samaritan did not understand; the thought of living water turned her mind to the streams she had often seen sparkling in the depths of the well.

"My Lord," she said, "you have no vessel, and the well is deep. Whence will you draw this living water?"

Her language had become respectful; for by the majesty of Jesus, and by the nobility of His utterance, she divined somewhat in Him above any ordinary Jew.

"Are you greater," she continued, "than our Father Jacob, who has given us this well, and who drank thereof — he and his sons, and his cattle?"

"He who drinks of this water," [13] answered the Saviour, "shall thirst again; but he who drinks of the water which I will give him shall never thirst. The water which I will give him shall become in him a fountain springing up to eternal life."

Jesus evidently did not speak of the springs which water the earth, but of those which are opened up in the heart, making it pure and fruitful. Under this figure He would typify His grace, and show her how man may find in it all that he can desire, without fearing that this bounteous repletion should ever turn to satiety.

Not grasping at all the deep significance of the words she heard, the Samaritan besought Jesus to disclose the whereabouts of this spring of life, as she conjectured it.

11 John iv. 7–9. 12 John iv. 10–12. 13 John iv. 13–15.

"Lord," she said, "give me this water, that I may no more thirst, and that I may be no more obliged to come here to draw water."

The Master was not disheartened; in the sinful nature of the Samaritan he saw only an illustration of the truth He had taught to Nicodemus,[14] that the soul which is as yet in bondage to the flesh is incapable of conceiving things divine, and hence the surest way to enlighten the mind is to purify the heart; therefore He at once turned aside the current of her thought, that He might recall this woman to a sense of her sins.

"Go," He said, "call your husband, and come hither."

"I have no husband," she responded instantly.[15]

"You are right in saying 'I have no husband,' " replied Jesus; "for you have had five such, and he whom you have now is not your husband; indeed, you have spoken very truly."

So it had been useless for the Samaritan to seek shelter behind that ambiguous answer of hers, "My husband! I have no husband." Jesus swept aside her feeble defences, and throwing open the gates of her soul, He laid bare its ill-gotten stores, all the accumulations of a guilty past — divorce, and not death, that had freed her from each of her five husbands in a shameful succession; a faithlessness which soon degenerated into debauchery, into scandalous connections, no longer protected by any thin veil of legal formalities.

The Samaritan, in her confusion at finding herself so easily exposed, now ceased from any further feigning.

"My Lord," [16] she said, "I see that you are a prophet."

Then, immediately turning the conversation from this humiliating theme, she took refuge in a question of doctrine, such as she thought would be likest to divert the mind of a rabbi of Israel. She recalled the rival pretensions of Sion and of Sichem; their own traditions, which told how the ancient Prophets were the ancestors of the Samaritans, and so represented them as sacrificing upon Mount Garizim.

"Our Fathers," she said, "have worshipped upon this mountain, and do you say that it is at Jerusalem we must worship?"

Jesus, satisfied with having awakened something like penitence in the heart of this sinning woman, would not refuse to follow her thought upon this new track.

"Woman," he said to her, "believe Me: the hour is coming when you will no longer worship the Father, either upon this mountain or in Jerusalem. You worship that which you do not know: as for Us, We worship that which We know, because Salvation cometh of the Jews."

By those last words Jesus recognised the primacy of Juda: to Juda alone belonged the Promises, the sacrifices acceptable to the Lord, the revealed Law, and the Ark of Alliance, overshadowed by the glory from on high, in token of the presence of Jehovah; but at the same time He announced the end of these prerogatives.

"The hour cometh, and it is already here, when the true worshippers shall

14 John iii. 20. 15 John iv. 17, 18. 16 John iv. 19–24.

worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for it is this that the Father wishes of those who worship Him. God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The Samaritan, drawn to Him by something she dimly discerned shining through these words, but dazzled and lost in this strange new world of thought, was now vaguely reminded of the Messiah, of Whom her fellow-countrymen were in expectation, Who was to be unto them for a guide.

"I know," she said, "that the Messiah, the Christ, is to come, and at His coming He will teach us all things." [17]

Jesus made answer to her, "I am He; I, who am speaking with thee."

He went no further at that moment; for the disciples were coming up towards them; but the woman, forgetful of all else beside, leaving her jar lying there at his feet, hastened back to the town,[18] calling to every one she met, "Come, see a Man who has told me everything I have done. Is He not the Christ?" And the latter were so thrilled by her words that they hurried out from Sichar in throngs, taking the way which leads up toward Jacob's well.

But the disciples had returned, just on the closing words of this interview, and great was their surprise at seeing the Master in private conversation with a woman [19] — and, of all things, a Samaritan! Nevertheless, none of them said to Him, "What were you asking of her? Why were you talking with her?" They offered Him the provisions they had brought.

"Master," said they, "eat." But Jesus' mind was filled with gladness at having garnered the first fruits from among the Gentiles, in the person of this poor Samaritan; and so deeply replenished with delight was His heart that it caused Him to forget all other hunger.

"I have a food to eat," was His response, "of which you know not."

The astonished disciples murmured at each other:

"Has any one brought Him food?"

"My food," Jesus replied, "is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to accomplish His work."

Thus then the work of God was the conversion of the Samaritans, who were now advancing toward Him. The swaying crowds, with their white garments fluttering through the fields of the valley below, which in four months more would be ready for the reapers, now gave them somewhat of the appearance of a harvest ripe for the sickle. The Saviour, with a glance, pointed them out to His disciples.

"Were you not just now saying: [20] 'Four months more and the harvest time will be here'? And now I say to you: Lift your eyes, and look over these plains; they are already white for the harvest."

Those words, "four months more," had doubtless been pronounced by some one of the disciples, looking at the fields lying around Jacob's well. Jesus, taking up the simple words, turned them in harmony with His thought; imaging to their minds a harvest which was ripening more rapidly than any of this earth

17 John iv. 25, 26.
18 John iv. 27–30.
19 John iv. 31–34.
20 John iv. 35.

— the harvest of souls, now coming toward Him from Sichar, who were to find a resting place in the storehouses of Heaven. And from this, using the occasion to compare the Apostles' duties with the toils of those who reap, Jesus proceeded to utter some instructions to His disciples, of which (it would seem) Saint John only retained the memory of a few detached sentences.

He explains how [21] "he who harvests" in the field of the Gospel "receives a wage, and garners in fruit which is life eternal." Far different is it here upon earth, where frequently before the time of reaping, the sower is in the tomb; whereas that festival in the heavens "shall unite in one common gladness both sower and reaper."

Again Jesus recalled the proverb: "One man soweth, and another reapeth"; [22] showing them how perfectly applicable this was to the Evangelical ministry. "I have sent you to reap where you have not laboured; others have laboured and you have entered into their labours." By this is to be understood not only the Prophets who had prepared Israel for the coming of the Messiah; but it also refers to the Christ and His teachings, of which the Apostles were to reap the fruits.

"However, the inhabitants of Sichar [23] were now gathered round the Saviour; they begged Him to tarry in their town and He abode there two days." Many believed in Him, upon the word of the woman who had given that testimony, "He has told me everything that I have done"; but a far greater number believed because of His own teachings. And these said to the woman —

"We believe now no longer because of your story. We have heard, and we now know of ourselves, that He is verily the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

Thus the Divine Master needed but two days to capture the heart and the faith of the Samaritans; and this is to be explained not merely by their docility, but rather by the idea they had formed of the Messiah. Though much less complete than those of the Jews, their notions of Christ's Kingdom were purer by far; they were not, like the latter's, all directed to the realisation of fleshly desires and carnal hopes, such as the end of all foreign rule and the restoration of the royalty of Israel. Hence, so long as He was in Judea, fearing they would make Him King against His will, Jesus concealed this dignity of the Messiah.[24] But in Samaria, on the contrary, He proclaimed it without reserve, and freely revealed Himself both as the Christ and the Saviour of the world.

21 John iv. 36.

22 John iv. 37, 38.

23 John iv. 39–42.

24 John vi. 15; Matt. xvi. 20, xvii. 9; Mark ix. 5.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS DRIVEN OUT OF NAZARETH

John iv. 43–46; Luke iv. 15–30; John iv. 46–54

After two days spent in Samaria, Jesus resumed the journey to Nazareth, but He lingered in many places along the road. Saint Luke shows Him "teaching in the synagogues"; [1] and Saint John says "that the Galileans welcomed Him because they had seen all He had done in Jerusalem during the Feast." [2] "He was extolled by all men, and His fame was spread throughout the whole country." [3]

Jesus knew "that no prophet is honoured in his native land," and that He had nothing to expect from His own home; but He would wait until such time as His Heavenly Father saw fit to make known His desires before He would quit it forever. He returned therefore to the little town "where He had been bred," [4] and once more appeared before the eyes of the Nazarenes, just as formerly had been His wont — outwardly, with the same simplicity of demeanour and garb as of old; wearing a long tunic, girt about His loins with a leathern belt; sandals upon His feet; a cloak drawn about Him; for head-covering, a loose veil bound about the forehead by a cord. Nor was there anything in His features which should startle the beholder; it was such a countenance as we may trace out among the paintings of the catacombs — an oval face; the beard scanty and very fine, ending in a double point; the complexion of austere whiteness; the eye dark and burning; His long hair parted over the brow and falling upon the shoulders; the expression one of gentleness habitually veiled in sadness. Although the exterior of Jesus was so familiar to His fellow citizens, none of them had as yet any knowledge of the power of His Word, for always in His youthful days He had been one who rather sought retirement and silence. All were then eager to hear Him, and they gave Him a warm welcome, when, on the Sabbath following, He came to the religious services of Nazareth.

We shall so very often find the divine Master in the synagogues of Judea, that we shall surely be pardoned for delaying the narrative an instant, if by so doing we may give some idea of those edifices, and of the ceremonies which were conducted therein.

Of different degrees of richness and grandeur, that varied according to the importance of their respective towns, the synagogues were, however, built all upon the same plan — a long hall extending between two porticos, and terminating in a sanctuary. Here there was neither image nor altar to be seen, but only a casket of wood, covered over with a veil and enclosing the Sacred Books of Israel. This part of the structure was held in the highest honour. It was there were to be found "the first seats," much sought after by scribes and Phari-

1 Luke iv. 15.
2 John iv. 45.
3 Luke iv. 14, 15.
4 Luke iv. 16.

sees,[5] and the places of distinction, to which were conducted such of the faithful as were renowned for their wealth.[6] Near the centre there was a raised platform upon which the reader of the holy books would ascend, with the rabbi who was to exhort the gathering. As to the faithful they kept to the nave of the edifice; this was divided by a balustrade into two parts, one of which was reserved for the men, the other for the women.

Every synagogue had at its head a chief, who was assisted by elders and pastors.[7] This body presided over the religious exercises, passed judgments, decreed punishments, excommunicated guilty parties, or sent them back in chains to the Sanhedrin. The most active of its members was the angel or legate of the synagogue, who read the prayers and was the representative of the assembly abroad. Below all the various dignitaries was an inferior minister, the Chazzan, who presented the reader with the holy books, guarded the doors and was a general caretaker.

As to the order of the services, it was fixed by rules most scrupulously observed. To the chanting of the Psalms succeeded the prayer, taken from Deuteronomy and called, from its first word, the Schema (Hearken): "Hearken, Israel, the Lord thy God is the One and only God: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Then came the eighteen benedictions, followed by the instruction, which held a high place in the religious service of the synagogue. From the evidence of Saint James we learn that "Moses was read every Sabbath, from the most ancient times"; [8] and as this reading was given in Hebrew, which the people no longer understood since the captivity,[9] an interpreter repeated the sacred text, phrase after phrase, in the vernacular. He did the like for the reading of the Prophets, which succeeded that of the Pentateuch. Ordinarily it was read by a rabbi, who made a running commentary upon it, and addressed to his listeners "the word of consolation." But when some stranger or some Jew distinguished for his doctrine happened to appear in the assembly, they would press him eagerly to mount the platform, so that they might profit by his instructions.

The renown which had now begun to surround the name of Jesus merited such honours for Him. The moment of His rising to speak was just as the reading of the Law was concluded. The caretaker of the synagogue handed Him the Oracles of Isaias. The Saviour, unwinding the long scroll of papyrus, rolled about a wand of wood or ivory, found the Lesson marked for the day, and read these prophetic words: [10]

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; therefore it is He has consecrated Me by anointment: He hath sent Me to bring good tidings to the poor, to heal the afflicted hearts, to announce to the captives their deliverance and to the blind recovery of their sight, to bring back, as free men, those who be broken beneath their fetters, to publish for the year of pardon of the Lord, and the day of His justice."

5 Matt. xxiii. 6.
6 James ¥. 3.
7 Luke viii. 41, xiii. 14; Acts xviii. 8, 17.
8 Acts xv. 21.
9 The popular tongue in the days of Jesus was the Aramean; it was a dialect which had sprung up during and after the Captivity, as the result of alterations grafted upon the Hebrew language.
10 Is. lxi. 1, 2.

Jesus could not have happened upon a more favourable theme. His comments were made upon the Hebrew text, whose full force we may well recall here. "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me; therefore it is He hath anointed Me, to announce the good news to the meek; He hath sent Me to heal the broken hearts, to announce freedom to the captives, to give unto the prisoners once more to see the light, and to proclaim the year of pardon of the Lord." The Vulgate adds the words of the Prophet, which are not given in the Greek text of the Gospel: "And to announce the day of His justice." The Saviour could not, indeed, deliver the lowly and the desolate, save by humbling those who oppress them.

The reading finished, Jesus rolled up the manuscript, handed it back to the servant, and, according to the custom of the rabbis, seated Himself and began to exhort the faithful. "The eyes of all were fixed upon Him," [11] and we may easily fancy what emotion thrilled the audience on hearing Him declare "that on this day this same Scripture is found to be fulfilled." They were the poor, the captives, the blind, the sorrowful hearts, to whom He was bringing salvation; and in their own times they had seen "the year of pardon," [12] the jubilee of the Lord, above all others. His language, so full of grace, amazed them at first; it sounded in their ears with all the weight of one having authority in the synagogue. "All were delighted with the words which fell from His mouth, and they said: 'Is not this the son of Joseph?' " [13]

But this wonderment soon turned to suspicion. "The son of a mechanic, a carpenter himself, whom they had seen so many a day working with his hands in their midst, could he be a prophet, unless indeed he could prove his mission by some prodigy, at least? Certainly he had spoken 'of healing souls,' [14] and there were gossips who said that elsewhere he had done such miracles; then why doesn't he begin now and here among his fellow-citizens?"

"Physician, heal thyself!" a mocking voice cried out at Him, as though it would say: "Do for yourself and your own that which you have procured for others!"

With perfect sweetness Jesus put aside this attack.[15] "Of a certainty," He said, "you may apply to Me the proverb: 'Physician, heal Thyself. The great things done at Capharnaum which we have heard spoken of, do the same in Thy native land.' But in truth, I say to you, a prophet is not received in his own country. There were many widows in Israel in the time of Elias, when the heavens were closed during three years and six months,[16] and there was a great famine over all the earth, and Elias was not sent to any one among them — no, not to any, but only to a widow woman of Sarepta, a city of the Sidonians. So also there were many lepers in Israel, under the prophet Eliseus, and not one among them was purified save only the Syrian Naaman." [17]

At these words a sudden access of fury brought the assembly to its feet: "Dares he compare them, the sons of Abraham, with pagan women and lepers!"

There were now no longer the mutterings of a few dissatisfied hearers, but

11 Luke iv. 20.
12 Luke iv. 19.
13 Luke iv. 22.
14 Luke iv. 18.
15 Luke iv. 23–27.
16 3 Kings xvii. 9.
17 4 Kings v. 14.

cries of rage against Him. All surging forward together, they seized Jesus, and swept Him along up to the summit of the mountain on which their town was built, thinking to cast Him headlong over the heights into the rocky hollows below.[18]

But His hour was not come; although it was permitted to the Nazarenes to push and thrust Him before them, to heap blows and abuse upon Him, yet, when they had reached the edge of the precipice some superhuman power held their arms fast. Helpless, speechless, transfixed, they saw Jesus pass through their midst and go upon His way, leaving them spellbound with a sudden stupour.

He withdrew from Nazareth as He had done from Jerusalem. In great sadness and weariness He climbed the hill which separates it from Cana, and from the wooded ridge cast one last look upon the peaceful valley where His youthful days had been passed, on the house which had sheltered Him during those thirty years, and where as a poor labourer He had toiled and suffered, and lived out this everyday existence of ours. It had mattered nothing, after all, that this village and this people were indeed His own, by so many ties of kinship and acquaintance — "His own received Him not"; [19] He must depart to bear unto strangers the salvation which these Nazarenes disdained; now, at last, He must go forth, not having where to lay His head.

Jesus, driven out of Nazareth, dwelt for a certain length of time at Cana — long enough for the news to be spread through all the cities around the lake. We do not know His reasons for remaining in this village, but we still find Him there when one of the king's officers [20] hastened to Him from Capharnaum, beseeching Him to cure his son who was dying.

Although little was known of Jesus among Herod's courtiers, His Name was always regarded with something of respect and awe among them, and cherished with longing hopes as well, by such as admired Him in secret. The Saviour greeted the Jewish nobleman, not without pity; and yet, comparing His self-seeking supplications with the generous forgetfulness of self shown by the Samaritans, it made Him grieve the more over the incredulity of Israel.[21] "If you do not see signs and prodigies," He said, "you do not believe." In uttering this reproach, it was not His intent to repulse the supplicant, nor to extinguish the glimmering spark of faith which He saw in his heart. This the officer must have gathered from the compassionate glance of the Master and from the tones of His voice, for he redoubled his urgent suit:

"Lord, come down before my poor little one dies."

What a note of terror is sounded in this prayer! — in the touching terms in which he mentions the son whom he fears he may never see again; but, too, how great was his mistake when in his anxiety and alarm he dreaded lest Jesus Himself would be rendered powerless if death were to anticipate and prevent Him! This man did not know that it is no more difficult for God to resuscitate the body than to cure it, and that neither time nor space can impose limits upon His power. The Divine Master took compassion upon this father's blindness, distraught with grief as he was.

18 Luke iv. 28–30.
19 John i. 11.
20 John iv. 46, 47.
21 John iv. 48–9.

"Go," he said; "your son lives."

And at that same moment wherein He healed the body of the child He worked so powerfully upon the heart of the father that the latter rose up to return home, filled at once with glad hope and confidence.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon [22] when the officer parted from Jesus. Even in the shortest days of winter he could have reached Capharnaum by nightfall, since Cana is not more than a six hours' journey; but some obstacle delayed him upon the road; he slept at some posting-place on the way, and did not arrive until the morrow.

As he neared his mansion the servants hurried out to greet him with the announcement that his son was living.

Immediately he asked them at what hour the child had begun to revive.

"Yesterday," they replied, "at the seventh hour, the fever left him."

He knew then that it was the very moment in which Jesus had said to him "Your son lives." And he believed, he and all his household.

"This was the second miracle which Jesus had performed thus far upon His return from Judea into Galilee." [23] By adding these words the Evangelist does not mean to ignore the wondrous deeds done at Capharnaum,[24] but he is thinking only of the miracles done by Jesus at Cana, and his intention is simply to connect two facts that took place in the same locality. The changing of the water into wine was the first manifestation of the Saviour made by Him on His return from the banks of the Jordan into Galilee. The healing of the official's son was the second sign, not less striking than the other, and destined indeed, as well as its predecessor, to mark the beginning of a new period in the ministry of Jesus.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST ACTS DURING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE

I. The Calling of the First Disciples

Matt. iv. 13–22; Mark i. 14–20

Cana, though more hospitable than Nazareth, was not to be the centre from which Jesus would extend His labours throughout Galilee; this glory was reserved to Capharnaum; and Saint Matthew, studious as ever to trace throughout the life of the Saviour the fulfilment of the prophecies, quotes here the famous oracle: [1]

"Land of Zabulon and Nephthali! Borderland of the sea! Country beyond the Jordan! Galilee of the nations! The people that abode in darkness have seen a great light. The light has arisen upon those who were seated in the region of the shadow of death."

22 John iv. 52.
23 John iv. 54.
24 Luke iv. 23.
1 Matt. iv. 13–16; Is. ix. 1, 2.

It was the arena of the ministry of Jesus which Isaias had here before his eyes: the sea of Tiberias, lying along the confines of Zabulon and Nephthali; the western shore, where the Christ ordinarily sojourned; upon the opposite side, and beyond the Jordan, the Greek colonies of the Decapolis — a mingling of races well described by the name Galilee of the Gentiles. The first Israelites who were carried off into Assyria had been snatched from this pleasant "land of Zabulon and Nephthali"; so to comfort them the prophet tells how a youthful liberator shall rise up, like a great light; and how Galilee, the first to be plunged in the dark night of slavery, is destined to be the first to view the newborn star.

This prediction, the theme of long-cherished hopes, was accomplished on the day when the Christ took up His abode upon the shores of the lake and made Capharnaum "His own city." [2] He came thither accompanied doubtless, as at the beginning of His public life, by His Mother, His brothers, and His disciples.[3] However, the foremost among the latter, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, whom He had chosen upon the banks of the Jordan, are not now found with their Master; and that we know so little of the doings of the Lord in Judea is due probably to the fact that they did not follow Him into that country. John the Evangelist seems to be the only one who made the journey through Samaria with the Lord; but he did not go on as far as Nazareth; for the Saviour, upon coming down to the shores of the lake, found him again at Bethsaïda, in the boat of his father Zebedee.[4]

It was Jesus' first care to go to this village, that He might gather together the princes of His Church. He was walking along the strand when he saw some fishermen busy casting their nets from out their boat; they were the two brothers Simon and Andrew.

Jesus spoke to them: "Come with Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

At once dropping everything, they followed Him. Having advanced a little further, He saw two other brothers, James and John; these also were in a boat, with their father Zebedee. Some accident had caused a breakage in their nets, and they were busy mending them. The Lord would not wait for the work to be finished; He called them, and upon the instant they followed Him, leaving behind them their father Zebedee, with his hirelings, in the fishing smack.

It was not that the Christ chose these humble fishermen at random, but it was because the Divine handiwork must needs be supreme in the work of our Redemption; and therefore it was needful that the ministers of Jesus, though unfitted by nature for such great designs, should nevertheless be so devoid of self-confidence, so free from self-love, as to let themselves be guided by grace. The first disciples were men such as this mission required — simple, upright of heart, and of generous inclinations. At the call of Jesus, they followed Him without hesitation and without casting a glance backwards; all that they left behind was little enough doubtless — a fishing craft, and a few nets; but that

2 Matt. ix. 1. 3 John ii. 12. 4 Mark i. 19.

little was their all, and in sacrificing it they showed what docile instruments Jesus was to find in them.

Furthermore their trade could not fail to have developed in them such qualities as are most suitable to the apostolic ministry, above all the religious spirit, natural to those who live by the sea; the life of these men, always exposed to perils, their powerlessness to contend with the great tempests, with that breath from on high which stirs up storms and calms them again in an instant — all these things combine to keep before their mind the feeling that they are in the hands of God; at the same time, because they are thus inured to danger, their courage is of the hardiest, and self-denial and devotedness become as habitual to them as sturdy prudence. These simple virtues were sufficient for the Master; surely they were as nothing in comparison with the sublime work which He had in mind; but thus to construct an edifice upon nothing is manifestly a work of creation; it is to perform an act of God. This indeed is why the Saviour, instead of calling to Himself the wise and great ones of Israel, chose rather for the foundation-stones of His Church four fishermen of Bethsaïda — Peter and Andrew, James and John.

II. A Sabbath Day at Capharnaum

Luke iv. 34–43; Mark i. 21–38; Matt. viii. 14–17

The first Sabbath after the return of Jesus to Capharnaum is an exceptional day for us; perhaps it is the only one during which we are able to follow the Saviour from early morning until evening, and even as far as the dawning of the next day; and so this detailed account shows us how, for the most part, Jesus was wont to spend His days.

The religious service commenced in the morning at the synagogue; [5] there the Lord found an attentive throng about Him, for His wondrous deeds were well known in Capharnaum; and, moreover, He could count among that gathering some faithful hearts — Mary His Mother, the sons of Zebedee, and of Jonas, the disciples who had followed Him from Judea, the officer of the court of Herod with his family, who were eager to hear the prophet whose word had already worked such marvels.

When the prayers were finished the Master ascended to take the chair. There He bore Himself very differently from the scribes and the doctors,[6] who were only accustomed to cite certain texts which would confirm their teaching by the authority of ancient traditions, or perhaps explain those of other famous rabbis. But Jesus taught as one having power; He spoke in His own name, interpreted the Scripture with authority, not merely stirring over the surface of the soul by subtile reasonings, but plunging deep down into the hearts of men, so that they felt themselves penetrated with His persuasion.

"All were in admiration of His doctrine," when a scream rent the air of the place; it was a demoniac in the throes of horrid frenzy. He had crept through the crowded doors, and at the first had experienced a strange rapture while

5 Mark i. 21. 6 Mark i. 22–26.

listening to the Divine Word; but unable any longer to withhold the foul spirit which held him in its clutches, he burst into shrieks of horror, perhaps even unto unclean actions. "Let be!" [7] he cried. "What is there between us and Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Who Thou art — the Holy of God!"

What are we to see in this confession of the demon? Was it a ruse whereby Satan meant to interrupt the discourse of Jesus and publish prematurely His title of the Messiah, or was it an avowal wrung from the terror of the fiend — the fawning of a slave that trembles before the lash and seeks to mollify the master about to inflict well merited punishment? Whatever may have been the motive of this homage, Jesus disdained it; at once He stood over the possessed, and threatening the devil which was torturing him.

"Be silent," [8] He said to it, "and depart from this man."

Satan obeyed: one last cry escaped the breast of the demoniac, who flung prone upon the ground for an instant writhed in terrible convulsions; then rose up before the eyes of all, free once more, completely calmed. His body, which had served as a dwelling place for the infernal powers, now showed no trace of their awful assaults.

At this sight fright and wonderment quite overwhelmed the crowds; for man can never feel the nearness of the invisible world without a stronger sense of emotion. And yet it was not so much the suddenness of the cure which astonished the Jews; indeed they were accustomed to the performance and the effects of various exorcisms, which were in fact much like the tedious ceremonials of their magicians. But that Jesus, without sprinkling of water or any mystical rite, could expel the demon with a word — it was this that overwhelmed them with wonder. Hitherto they had only experienced the eloquence of the Christ; this prodigy declared the invincible might of His word; and now their souls must needs tremble in His presence as before the Supreme Majesty.

"What is this?" they whispered among themselves; "what new and all-powerful doctrine is this? [9] He commands the spirits, and they obey!"

In these sayings there is no trace of that bitter spirit which, in a short time would try to brand the miracles of the Saviour as a violation of the Sabbath, or as a proof of a compact with the fiends. The Galileans harboured no such suspicion as these; they saw, they believed, and their faith, spreading ever further and wider, finally penetrated throughout all the countryside.

The marvellous deeds of that Sabbath were by no means ended now. Leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered the dwelling of Simon.[10] The son of Jonas the fisherman was married to a woman of Capharnaum; thus he had in this city, as well as at Bethsaïda, both family connections and a home. Here the Divine Master found the mother-in-law of the disciple sinking under a raging attack of fever,[11] her anxious kinsfolk grouped about her bed. At once all eyes were turned toward the Saviour; every voice was raised to implore His aid.

Jesus drew near, and rebuking the fever with the same authority which He

7 Luke iv. 34.
8 Luke iv. 35.
9 Mark i. 27.
10 Mark i. 29.
11 Luke iv. 18.

was only a little later to display in quelling the rebellious powers of nature. He now bade the disease to depart; and then, taking the hand of the sick woman, He gently raised up her shattered body, by the simple contact infusing a plenitude of health and life into her aged body. The fever disappeared, and that without leaving behind it any weakness, which is its usual sequel. On the instant the mother of Simon's wife arose, then, as it was the hour at which they usually dined — for on the Sabbath it was customary to have a noonday meal — she herself made ready what was needed for Jesus and His disciples, set the dishes in order, and herself served the guests.

Capharnaum was still talking of the miracle in the synagogue when the report of this other prodigy was noised abroad; the excitement became general, and nothing but the inviolable quiet of the Sabbath could have held the ardour of the multitude in check. But as soon as the rays of the setting sun along the distant hills marked the end of the holy day,[12] the throngs came hurrying through the streets, some bringing the insane and possessed folk to the Divine healer, others bearing pallets, on which were laid those too ill to move themselves; soon the whole town had collected about Simon's door, displaying before the eyes of Jesus every form of wretchedness known to poor human nature — madness, deformity, and every hideous disease.

Not one of those who besought His help was rejected by the Saviour, but without distinction laying His hands upon them, He healed them. As for the possessed, one word from Him was enough to deliver them; trembling at the sound of the Master's voice, the devils fled away, crying aloud, "Thou art the Son of God." [13] But with threatening words Jesus forbade them to say that He was the Christ.

The Saviour's ministrations were prolonged far into the night, and to all He showed such touching compassion, that in the wonders of that day's doings Saint Matthew sees the fulfilment of the words of Isaias: [14] "He hath taken upon Himself our weaknesses and hath borne our infirmities." None ever understood so clearly as Jesus did how disease and death have entered into the world through sin; [15] no one consequently has ever been so keenly struck with horror at sight of them. Hence arose that great pity in Him predicted by Isaiah; hence came His tears before the tomb of Lazarus; [16] and so too, His sighs of sorrow at sight of the deaf-mute.[17] His heart could never view the depth of our woes without strong throes of sympathy, and without reaching out His healing hand to dispel even the sin itself, which is its source.

The last sufferer did not quit the house of Peter until the dawning of another day.[18] Without giving a moment to sleep the Lord rose, and went out into the morning streets. The little city of Capharnaum was still all silent and at rest when He passed along its narrow ways, and reached at length the desert place wherein He wished to pray alone.

But this holy solitude was soon to be broken in upon; the crowds, surprised at not seeing the Saviour upon their awakening, set to work seeking Him on

12 Luke iv. 40.
13 Luke iv. 41.
14 Is. liii. 4.
15 Rom. v. 12.
16 John xi. 35.
17 Mark vii. 34.
18 Mark i. 35.

every side. Peter and His companions were most noticeable in their eagerness; [19] they found the Divine Master absorbed in God.

"Every one is looking for You," they said to Him.

"Let us go elsewhere," replied Jesus, "into the neighbouring towns, and into the cities, so that I may preach there also; it is for this that I am come."

The throngs were coming up, close after the disciples; they wished to keep the Saviour among them; but He withstood him,[20] and told him, as He had told the rest, that His mission compelled Him to depart for a time, that he might carry unto others the good tidings of the Kingdom of God.

III. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes — Healing of a Leper

Luke iv. 44, v. 1–16; Mark i. 39–45; Matt. iv. 23–25, viii. 1–4

On going out of Capharnaum, Jesus followed the borders of the lake, and striking out toward the north, He stopped again at Bethsaïda, the village-home of His first disciples.

So the sons of Jonas and of Zebedee once more launched their little barks, and were out fishing all night long; [21] for they were poor, and the necessity of getting something wherewith to buy bread for the morrow forced them back to their old occupation. But it was all a useless toil dredging and hauling over the sea; until finally the sun rose, and the morning heats put an end to their hopes. They had taken nothing, even during those hours most favourable for their work.

Greatly discouraged, they returned to the shore just as Jesus was coming down thither; there were glad crowds surrounding Him, eager to catch His words. But though they pressed close about Him, He straightway espied the two boats, and His disciples, who, having landed upon the beach, were washing their nets. At once He went on board of Simon's boat, and desired Him to draw a little away from the land; then, seated in this first chair of Peter, He began to instruct the people.

But His longing to spread the good news did not prevent His feeling a keen sympathy for the useless and tedious toils and disappointment of the fishers; so when He had ceased speaking to the people, He said to Simon, "Push out into the deeper water"; and to His companions, "Cast over your nets for the fish."

"Master," Simon responded, "we have laboured all the night without taking anything, but at Your word I will cast the net."

They dropped it over the side, and thereupon drew up such a great quantity of fishes that the cords were breaking. As they were separated too far from the others to be heard in the neighbouring bark, they made signals for their companions to come to their aid.[22] When these were come, the draught of fishes filled the two boats to such a degree that they were almost submerged.

19 Mark i. 36–38.
20 Luke iv. 42, 43.
21 Luke v. 1–11.
22 Luke v. 7.

Seeing this, Simon Peter threw himself at the feet of the Christ: "Depart from me, O Lord," he said, "for I am a sinful man."

By this miracle Jesus revealed Himself as lord and master over nature and her resources. And so Peter only yielded to a feeling of terror which was common to all Jews, since they believed that to see God was to die; the same dread fell also upon those who were with him, and on the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus reassured them, one and all,[23] saying, "Be not afraid! hereafter you shall be fishers of men."

It was the second time the Saviour had spoken these words to the disciples, and He showed them, by the miraculous draught of fishes, how fruitful the power which He would confer upon their souls was to be. This prodigy was therefore a figure of their ministry; thus they were to come out from the plain of Genesareth to launch upon the stormy sea of events, to live in labour and trouble without ceasing, tossed about upon waves more restless than those of their little lake. Yet if their duties, hitherto so peaceful, were henceforth to be fraught with trials, by a just recompense there were the most glorious rewards assured to them; they were to exchange their rude trade for a celestial mission; instead of the rough meshes of their old torn and mended nets, they were to have the lovely snare of the Gospel, "which kills not that which is taken in it, but protects it, and brings up to the sweet light of Heaven that which it has rescued from the depths of the abyss." [24] Had the fishermen of Bethsaïda any such full comprehension of this symbol of which he made use? We think not. God, however, let them catch some glimmerings of the light; for their fright gave place to confidence. They no longer prayed the Lord to depart, but rowed their boats back to the shore, and threw everything aside, once for all, to go and follow Him.

Surrounded by these companions, Jesus traversed all Galilee,[25] "teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all the ill and infirm among the people." The very poorest villages, even those which had no synagogues, were not forgotten. The Lord bore to all the good tidings; not waiting, like John the Baptist, for them to come to Him, but seeking out such as He could save. The days of the Divine Master among these little hamlets were passed much like that Sabbath day at Capharnaum; the places and the times were different, but always with the same patience and never wearying tenderness He lavished His good deeds upon all; with inexhaustible compassion He cured their souls and bodies, healed every malady, and departing, left behind Him, as it were, the perfume of His presence.

Of that first mission in Galilee we know but one single event.[26] Jesus had come to a town whose name is unknown, when a man, running toward Him, threw himself at His feet, and implored His mercy. The unfortunate well merited pity; leprosy had consumed his whole body. The scourge when it reaches this stage becomes an object of horror, for the corruption of death has then actually taken possession of a living body. No plague was dreaded more

23 Luke v. 9.
24 S. Ambrose.
25 Luke iv. 44; Matt. iv. 23; Mark i. 39.
26 Luke v. 12–16; Mark i. 40–45; Matt. viii. 2–4.

by the Jews; they called it the finger, or the handwriting, of God; and in its ravages they saw the counterpart of that sin which fastens upon the soul and poisons the very wellsprings of life within it. The funereal tokens always surrounding lepers still further fortified them in this feeling. Banished from home, and not allowed to enter beyond the city gates, their garments tattered and torn to shreds like those of mourners, their heads shaven, and their lips covered with a veil — thus they were nothing more to the eyes of their fellow-citizens than living, moving sepulchres, obliged at every approach of man to send forth that lugubrious cry, "Unclean! Unclean!"

Although the leper of the Gospel had infringed this law [27] by overstepping the limits of the city's enclosure, his misery was so piteous that at the first glance Jesus thought of nothing except to assuage it.

"Lord," [28] cried the wretched creature, "if You will, You can heal me!"

Immediately the Master stretched out His hand, laid it upon his body with its repulsive sores.

"I will," He said; "be thou healed."

And on the instant the leprosy disappeared. It was because of the sufferer's faith that Jesus granted him so prompt a hearing, but it was also owing to his sad condition. No leper ever invoked His aid without being heard; the Lord always had compassion upon their desolate lives, and at once purified them.

However, after having yielded to the first movement of pity, Jesus now saw in this man only a law-breaker. He reproached him severely, and bade him go out of the city which he had presumed to enter unsanctioned.

"Be careful," He said, "to tell no one of this; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer in return for your cure that which Moses has ordained, in order that it may be a testimony unto them." [29]

By this command Jesus not only testified His respect for the legal ordinances; He wished also to cover over in silence an act which revealed in Him the supreme lawgiver, able to touch the most dreaded and most anxious impurities without being contaminated, and thus working a cure reserved to the power of God alone. A marvel so manifestly divine could not fail to excite unbounded hopes in the multitudes, hopes which would be likely to interfere with the Saviour's mission. Therefore He spared neither commands nor threats in order to insure the silence of the man whom He had just healed. But these precautions were all thwarted by the indocility of the leper, who, remembering nothing but his debt of gratitude, went forth and published the news on every hand.[30]

What the Saviour wished to prevent now occurred; the excitement among the people was so intense, their enthusiasm was so overpowering, that He could not enter publicly into a town any longer, but was compelled to remain outside the cities, in the wilderness.[31]

Thither they flocked from all parts, and there Jesus pursued His ministry in perfect freedom; for at such a distance from the crowded centres He had not much cause for anxiety lest His hearer's ardour should call down upon His labours the vengeance of Herod.

27 Lev. xiii. 46; Num. v. 2.
28 Luke v. 12.
29 Lev. xiv. 2-32.
30 Mark i. 45.
31 Mark i. 45.

IV. Healing of a Paralytic

Luke v. 17–26; Mark ii. 1–12; Matt. ix. 1–8

The precautions taken by the Saviour had not been unnecessary; not many days after the healing of the leper, on returning to Capharnaum, He found numbers of Pharisees and Scribes gathered there — not only from Galilee, but from Judea and from Jerusalem.[32] The hatred shown Him by the Sanhedrin, which had been the cause of Jesus' departure from Judea, leaves hardly any doubt but that these doctors were commissioned to spy upon the new prophet in order to detect Him in some offence as well as to try and discover His ultimate designs.

Accordingly as soon as rumours of His arrival began to be circulated through the town we see them hurrying along with the populace, and the first to enter the house where the Saviour was; there they seated themselves within the inmost circle of those about him, bent upon hearing and observing everything.[33] A crowd of citizens, which on this day was denser than ever, had filled the dwelling, and kept surging about the outer doors; so that it was now quite impossible to find access to any part of it. Jesus, Who had remained seated, was teaching them according to His custom, when suddenly, above their heads, hands were seen making an opening in the ceiling of earthen clods (of which the roofs of houses in the East are often composed), and then four men proceeded at once to let down a pallet, on which a poor invalid was lying. It was a paralytic, who had seized upon this expedient so to reach the great Healer. Those who were carrying him, losing all hopes of forcing an entrance through the multitudes, had drawn him up to the roof, and tearing away the rafters with the clay tiling, had by this means managed to deposit their burden at the very feet of Jesus.

This deed, more eloquent than any words, and their faith, which would not stop to consider any obstacles, touched the heart of the Divine Master, and He granted to the sufferer even more than he had dared to hope for.

"My son," [34] He said, "take courage; your sins are forgiven you."

The sufferings of the paralytic were doubtless the result, or perhaps the punishment, of past wrongdoing; and Jesus, by His divine power penetrating to the very root of the evil, worked the cure of soul and body at one and the same time.

This speech scandalised the scribes, seated about the Saviour; for the power of remitting sins, which He assumed, belongs only to God. Jesus saw their glowering countenances and the menace that gleamed in their eyes. In the bottom of their hearts, perhaps even upon their lips, He could easily hear their mutterings, "What does this man mean to say? [35] He is blaspheming. Who can remit sins except God?"

"Why do you think evil things in your heart?" He answered them, "Which

32 Luke v. 17.
33 Luke v. 17–19.
34 Mark ii. 5.
35 Mark ii. 6, 7.

is easier to say to a paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say to him, 'Rise up; take your bed, and go into your house'?"

The question left them no room for evasion; for if upon the first of these claims He could not be convicted of imposture, still they thought it might not be the same as regards the second, although it would require a miracle to sustain it. Yet to make this avowal before Jesus might even be to furnish Him with another weapon against them, and they would thus repose themselves to be brought to confusion upon the spot.

The scribes perceived this, and mistrustful as to what might be the power of the Christ, they remained silent.

Knowing their thoughts, He proceeded:

"Now, that you may know the Son of Man has power on the earth to remit sins," [36] He turned to the paralytic, "I say to thee: Arise; take up thy bed, and go into thy house!"

The sick man rose up directly, took the pallet on which he had been lying, and threading his way through the swaying masses of people, returned to his home, glorifying God.

Those who witnessed the miracle were at first as if struck dumb with amazement; but their wondering delight soon found tongue and voice, and they said to each other, with tremulous lips and bated breath,

"We have seen marvellous things today!" [37]

While others began to glorify God, acknowledging in this deed a prodigy such as never before had greeted their eyes, and they praised the Lord God for having bestowed such power upon man.

V. The Calling of Levi

Luke v. 27, 28; Mark ii. 13, 14; Matt. ix. 9

Of the six disciples Jesus had chosen on the banks of the Jordan, only four were now with Him constantly; and all of these were equally poor and of a like simplicity of mind and soul. But now it was to be from a class which the Jews looked upon as the vilest and hatefulest in society, that the Lord would select His fifth companion in the person of Levi the publican.

We know in what esteem that title was held in Latin literature of this age. It was the name employed to designate those knights who were engaged in farming out the tax revenues of the provinces. These opulent citizens should not be confounded with the publicans of the Gospel. The latter were merely agents, of the lowest class, who collected taxes in the name of the great Roman companies; for in the course of time these enterprises had become too considerable for one knight to undertake the responsibility of discharging the duties. And so an administrator, residing at Rome, represented his associates, and directed the subalterns whom he employed to supervise the incoming and outgoing of merchandise, and to compute more or less justly the value of the same. Naturally they

[36] Luke v. 24. [37] Luke v. 25.

preferred to appoint to this latter office native residents of the conquered provinces, whose familiarity with the language, manners, and resources of their native land, would make them much fitter for such difficult functions than any foreigners could be.

The disrepute attached to this career was enough to prevent men who were held in any esteem in the community from embracing it; and the Roman collectors were compelled to take their agents from among the lower classes of the populace. Delivered into such hands, the power delegated to these men by the great syndicates degenerated naturally into abuses and exactions, which finally rendered the name publican synonymous with that of robber. Cicero does not hesitate to call them the vilest of men; Stobæus looks upon them as the wolves and bears of the human race.

Beside the general aversion felt for such a trade, there was, in Judea, an additional reason for holding it in abhorrence. Every payment of tribute to foreign masters was in the eyes of the Israelites, a forbidden act, a transgression of the Law of Jehovah; the publicans, by helping to consummate this sacrilege, were therefore regarded not only as traitors to their country, but as infidels and apostates, and for this reason quite as despicable as any criminals, courtesans, or pagans.[38] It was, then, from among the outcasts of society that Jesus picked out this new disciple.

Capharnaum, situated just where the great highways of Damascus, Tyre, Sephoris, and Jerusalem meet, and through which caravans were continually passing, had grown to be one of the central points best adapted for the handling of custom duties; hence there were to be found here great numbers of publicans. Jesus, as He was threading his way down toward the shore of the lake, saw one of them named Levi, the son of Alpheus,[39] sitting at his toll-office.

"Follow Me!" He said to him.

The publican arose, left all, and followed the Lord.

We are amazed at this prompt obedience; but Levi knew Who He was Who called him. He could not have been all this time an indifferent spectator, since every day he must have listened to the travellers repeating, or even heard himself, the noble utterance of the new prophet, who was now stirring up all Galilee to higher thoughts; surely his heart must have been already touched, and all his thoughts attracted to Jesus. So when the divine Master, far from drawing away His garments in fear of any contact with the publican, as was generally done among the Israelites, addressed to him that quiet appeal: "Follow Me!" Levi, who until now had never met with anything but contempt, yielded to the grace which had been long time moving within him, and joined the little band of followers around the Saviour, never afterwards to be separated from Him.

[38] Matt. ix. 11, xxi. 31, xviii. [39] Mark ii. 13, 14.
17.

BOOK FOURTH

SECOND YEAR OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

The Testimony of the Devils

And Devils went out from many, crying out and saying: Thou art THE SON OF GOD! And rebuking them He suffered them not to speak, because they knew that He was THE CHRIST (Saint Luke, iv. 41).

CHAPTER I

THE SECOND PASCHAL SEASON IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

I. The Pool of Bethesda

John v. 1–47

About this time the Saviour was minded to go up to Jerusalem for the approaching festival season. The Gospel does not mention this celebration by name; but the most ancient Fathers looked upon it as being the second Passover in the Ministry of Jesus, and we entirely coincide with their conclusions. It was to be the last in which He could take part without hazard of His life; and so He interrupted His mission in Galilee, joined company with one of the caravans of pilgrims, and ascended with them to the Holy City. He went thither in obedience to the commands of His Father, that He might once again offer His ungrateful city the salvation which they had disdained; and so His first thought now, as it had ever been, was to seek out the desolate and distressed that He might comfort and relieve them.

"Now there is at Jerusalem,[1] hard by the Gate of the Flocks, a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda" (the House of Mercy). It was a huge basin, "with five sides surrounded by porticos. Here, lying upon the ground, was a great multitude of infirm, blind, lame and men with withered limbs, waiting for the water to be set in motion. For an angel of the Lord descended at a certain moment into the pool and stirred the waters, and the first to enter therein after that he had moved upon them was cured of whatsoever malady he lay under."

In the shadow of these porches a man was stretched, who had lain there for now thirty-nine years. He had always been expecting to be cured; but because he had no one to help him, each time was doomed to see some other of his fellow-sufferers forestall him. He was so lonely and desolate, his hopes had been disappointed so many times, that the wretched fellow was quite cast down and discouraged.

Jesus perceived him lying upon the ground, and knowing that he had been ill for such a long time was filled with pity for him.

1 John v. 2–9.

"Do you wish to be cured?" He said to him.

The paralytic scarcely grasped the meaning of this question; but he felt that it was a compassionate offer from a stranger, who would perhaps be willing to aid him at the favourable moment.

"Sir," he said, "I have no one to carry me to the pool when the water is troubled, and the moment I reach there another goes down ahead of me."

"Arise!" said Jesus; "take up your bed, and walk."

Instantly the poor creature arose, caught up the mat on which he was lying, swung it over his shoulders, and started to walk. Beside himself with joy, he looked about him to thank his benefactor; but Jesus had disappeared in the shadows under the crowded galleries.

It was on a Sabbath day that the Lord performed this cure. The witnesses of the miracle were too astounded to hinder the paralytic from carrying his bed off with him; but the elders of the people,[2] whom he met on the road, were horrified at this violation of the holy repose.

"It is the Sabbath!" they exclaimed; "it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

"He who cured me told me himself: 'Take up your bed and walk,'" was his response.

"Who is the man," they demanded, "who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'"

The poor paralytic did not know; but the councillors of the Sanhedrin, whose deliberations were now constantly concerned with the doings of Jesus, detected His handiwork in this new prodigy, and they betrayed their hatred and their suspicions at the same time by their manner of questioning this man — not wanting to know "Who has healed you?" but, "Who told you to carry your mat?" or, in other words, to break the Law?

And so they let the humble offender go, whom under other circumstances they would have punished severely, and turned their whole attention to the fact that Jesus was present in their city. However, the delighted cripple, who had been made whole after so wonderful a fashion, wished at least to return thanks to God, and at once went up to the Temple for this purpose.[3] There Jesus encountered him; always careful to renew the soul at the same time as the body. He said to him:

"I have given you back your health; hereafter guard against sin, for fear lest some worse evil should happen to you."

The man forthwith went in search of the Jews, and told them that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

By this act he did not mean to betray his benefactor, but on the contrary to glorify Him, and give some token of his own gratitude. The result was not such as to gratify his desires; for this news only increased the anger of the Sanhedrin by confirming its suspicions. In that same hour they resolved to put down this Man, who violated their observances. We do not know whether it was in the Temple or in Jerusalem that they found Him; but wherever it may

2 John v. 10–13. 3 John v. 14, 15.

have been, they were overcome with astonishment, when they heard Him, Whom they had come to rebuke, declare in their presence that, as He was the Son of God, He had all power over the Sabbath.

To the casuists who accused Him with having broken the Law, Jesus replied,[4] therefore, that the repose of the sacred day is not the inertia of death, but a suspension of corporal labour, whose excess does indeed wither and destroy the soul; but that it is at all times lawful to do good, and that if God, after the Creation, has made His habitation within an everlasting Sabbath, this His attribute is not so to say, the offspring of sterile sloth; but rather He thus conservates the indwelling life of all creatures by continuing to be, what He is in his essence, the Life eternal, the eternal quickener unto life. In like manner He, being the Son of God, and God even as is His Father, could not know any surcease of activity in His operations: "My Father ceaseth not to work." He said, "and I work likewise."

This response incensed the Sanhedrin councillors, who saw nothing in the Christ but an impious fellow and a blasphemer. Henceforth they were determined to compass His death,[5] "not only because He had broken the Sabbath, but also because He said that God was His own Father, making Himself equal to God." But for the present moment, not daring to proceed to extremities, they submitted to listen to His word, which like a sword of fire cleaved their spirit, piercing to the inmost recesses of the soul; [6] for Jesus, far from concealing His office in the presence of the princes of Israel, proclaimed openly Who He was.

Declaring that He is God as His Father is God,[7] the Saviour added, moreover, that He possessed three divine attributes of the Godhead — the power of restoring spiritual life to those dead in sin, the power of judging, and the power of raising up from the grave unto life all flesh, at the last day. To establish such lofty prerogatives as these, the testimony of John was not enough, being that of man. Jesus appeals to three Witnesses which come of God — His miracles, the unmistakable sign of His mission; [8] the Voice of the Father which at the Jordan had proclaimed Him His well-beloved Son; finally the authority of the Scriptures.

"Search them," [9] He said, "since you think you find eternal life therein; they themselves give testimony of Me. And you will not come to Me that you may have life! . . . I know you; I know that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in the name of My Father, and you receive Me not. Let another come in his own name, him you will receive."

These reproaches show that the Saviour was not content to enlighten the Sanhedrin as to the truth, but he sought to move their hearts as well. Yet this effort was to be in vain; the great men of Judea were too haughty to adore the Son of a carpenter as their Christ. Though they did not dare to give vent to their hatred and contempt, they preserved a perfect secrecy as to what He had said to them; for His claim that He was the Son of God, confirmed and

4 John v. 17.
5 John v. 18.
6 Hebr. iv. 12.
7 John v. 19–30.
8 John v. 36.
9 John v. 39–47.

justified as it was by so many miracles, would have caused the people to proclaim Him as the Messiah. On the other hand, as Jesus had transgressed the Pharisaic precepts by healing a man within the limits of the Sabbath, they directed all their public attacks upon this one point, and accused Him of contemning a day of the Lord, assuring themselves that the people would side with them in any quarrel which involved the sanctity of the day of rest.

Indeed there was no institution more holy in the eyes of the Jews. They looked upon it as the one individual characteristic which distinguished them from all other nations, and esteemed themselves as chosen by Jehovah solely to guard its observance. The ancient directions were far from satisfying their scrupulosity. After the Captivity, the Great Synagogue had drawn up a list of thirty-nine articles, called "Aboth," or principal prohibitions. These in turn had given birth to an infinite number of "Toledoth," or descendants; and these secondary restrictions, embracing every detail of daily life, did, so to speak, really render any action impossible during the Sabbath day.

We can see how the Pharisaic customs must have hindered and hampered the ministry of Jesus; and how easily the Sanhedrin, by exaggerating each least infringement upon its edicts, gradually so prevailed over the general mind that at last popular indignation demanded its Victim that had been thus made ready for the sacrifice.

II. A Sabbath Walk Through the Fields

Luke vi. 1–5; Mark ii. 23–28; Matt. xii. 1–8

As we proceed hereafter, we shall find the hatred of the princes of Israel evermore pursuing and annoying the Saviour. Everywhere — along the roads, in the fields, and in the wilderness, even when He seemed to be alone with His disciples — He was shadowed by spies who were stirring up the crowd against Him. From the first day, we find traces of this persecution. The Lord, as He was returning to Galilee, on the Sabbath which followed the Passover,[10] happened to be walking through a cornland, now ripe for the harvest. The disciples moved by hunger, broke off some ears of wheat; rubbing it in their hands and blowing away the chaff, they began to eat the grain. In this there was nothing which was not lawful. Moses had permitted it in definite terms;[11] and from age to age in the Orient the custom has always been cherished of never refusing the wanderer this charity, which costs so little. But although the Law allowed one to take a few ears, it forbade all reaping and gathering and threshing of the harvest on the Sabbath day; but the Scribes had decided that to pluck an ear, and to bruise the grain between your palms, was the same as "to reap, to gather in, and to thresh the crops."

Some Pharisees who were following the little band had no mind to let such an infraction of their rules pass unnoticed. They approached the Saviour, and said to Him:

10 Luke vi. 1. 11 Deut. xxiii. 25.

"Look! your disciples are doing that which is not allowed upon the Sabbath day."

Jesus walking before His disciples, had taken no heed of their action, nor participated in it; but far from disowning the responsibility, He covered their innocent indulgence with the mantle of His benign approval. To these councillors who reproached Him with having broken one of the precepts, He quoted the Law as opposed to them, and with something of irony confessed His surprise that men so deeply versed in the Scriptures should be ignorant of their teaching on this point.

"Have you never read, then," he said,[12] "that which David did when he was compelled by necessity and urged on by hunger, he and those who were with him? How he entered the house of God, in the time of the high priest Abiathar, and ate the Loaves [13] of Proposition, which it is not permitted to any one to eat except the priests, and gave to those who were with him?"

If David, in his extreme need, might lay hands upon the sacred bread, and so transgress the precepts of the Law, how could they hold it criminal for His hungry disciples to have pulled a few handfuls of wheat, that they too might sustain their strength? Furthermore, the Pharisees themselves acknowledged that the Sabbatical observances must have their exceptions; for this maxim was generally received among them: "In the Temple there is no Sabbath." Even on this day of rest, the priests might cut the wood, kindle the altar-fires, replace the Loaves of Proposition, and sacrifice a double holocaust; [14] the sanctity of the Temple itself kept them blameless.

Jesus pleaded with them for this generous reading of a law which His adversaries insisted upon as being so inflexible, and He admonished them that their exceptions applied to Him as much as to the Temple. Indeed, had He not just now proclaimed before the Sanhedrin that He was the Son of God made man, and hence rightly to be revered as a sanctuary of Jehovah? These lawyers who were hounding His steps must certainly have known this; but once more He recalled it to their mind in these words: [15]

"But I say to you, there is here a greater than the Temple."

The Master longed to gain his persecutors to the truth, much more than He desired to confound them. Therefore He sought to enlighten their minds by showing that "the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath." [16] The Sabbath instituted by God to lighten the burden of man's labours, the offspring of his sin, is, in the divine order, for a pledge of a never-ending rest and peace. During this day of mercy, to forbid the hungry from gathering a few grains of wheat were to change our heavenly Father into a tyrant, and to turn His loving commands into hateful restrictions. Jesus mourned over these blind and stolid interpreters of the Law.

"If you but knew," He concluded, "what is the meaning of those words: 'I love mercy better than sacrifice,' you would never have condemned the innocent." [17]

12 Mark ii. 25, 26.
13 1 Kings xxi. 6.
14 Num. xxviii. 9, 10.
15 Matt. xii. 6.
16 Mark ii. 27.
17 Matt. xii. 7; Osee. vi. 6.

This response scarcely touched these men, stubbornly clinging to their mistaken views; and though at this moment they did not venture to move against the Divine Master, they decided to scrutinise His actions more narrowly than ever.

III. The Man with the Withered Hand

Luke vi. 6–11; Mark iii. 1–6; Matt. xii. 9–21

It was on the journey from Jerusalem into Galilee that the incident of the plucking of the wheat occurred. The Evangelists do not tell whereabouts on the journey Jesus tarried; but on one of the Sabbaths following they make mention of His being in the synagogue of a little town. Now there was a man present whose right hand had all shrunken away. According to the "Gospel of the Nazarenes," it was a poor mason, who had been hurt in some accident.

"I beseech you," he said to Jesus, "restore me to health, so that I need no longer beg my bread in shame and sorrow."

His prayer was overheard by the Pharisees, who were sharply watching these deeds of the Christ, "that they might have cause to accuse Him." They whispered among themselves these words, which came to the ears of the Master:

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"

Jesus did not keep them long in uncertainty. "Arise," He said to the cripple, "and stand there in the midst."

Then turning to the Pharisees, seated, as was their wont, in the seats of honour,

"I ask you," he said,[18] "is it allowed upon the Sabbath day to do good or evil — to save or to destroy a soul?"

Such questioning as this disconcerted them; they had only come to listen to His discourse in order to surprise Him in some error; confused at being anticipated in this way, they held their peace.

The divine Master attempted to draw them out of their silence by recalling their own teachings on the subject. "What man is there among you," He pursued, "who owns only one sheep, if it fall into pit on a Sabbath day will not take hold on it and draw it out? But how much more is a man worth than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day."

His reasoning admitted of no reply; this the Pharisees saw clearly enough, and they closed their lips the tighter. The Lord waited for their response; as His glance passed from one face to another He saw reflected there nothing but dumb rage, obstinate dislike, and bitter spite. At the sight His heart swelled with deep indignation; it seemed to all the bystanders that in another moment He would surely overwhelm these hypocrites; but almost immediately He recovered His habitual tone of compassion, and, grieving for their blindness, He merely said to the cripple:

"Stretch out your hand."

18 Luke vi. 9.

The man obeyed. At the word of the Saviour life revived in the withered limb, and at once it was become whole like the other.

Thus, not content at having discomfited His enemies in argument before the whole synagogue, the Lord would also manifest His power before their eyes; without handling, even without touching, the cripple, without performing any external act, one single word had been sufficient to effect this prodigy. Would they dare to say that one word, one single word spoken in kindness, was a violation of their Sabbath?

That they were so powerless against Him was a maddening thought for them; they went away from the place, beside themselves with rage, and took counsel together "as to what they might do to Jesus." [19]

But nowhere else were their evil plottings destined to encounter so many obstacles as in Galilee; for the people of this province, upon whom the Saviour had lavished every good gift, drawn to Him by His gracious doctrine, and much less imbued with the Pharisaical superstitions than were the Jews of Jerusalem, would not have permitted any assault upon their prophet. More than this, the Sanhedrin had only a limited authority in this land, for here it could not stir without the sanction of Herod.

It was necessary, then, in the first place, to come to an understanding with the ministers and partisans of that prince.[20] Hitherto the Pharisees of Jerusalem had displayed the most insulting scorn for these courtiers, alluding to them as "Herodians," and "the apostates," taunting them with having borne the Roman yoke quite willingly, and with imitating the manners of Gentiles, as well as the impiety of the Sadducees. But with their hatred of the Christ they now brushed aside every one of their scruples, and the emissaries of the Sanhedrin only considered how they might lure their former enemies into these schemes of vengeance.

In this they succeeded without any trouble; for the austere morality which Jesus taught, the mastery He held over the hearts of the people, His claim that He was the Son of God — all these seemed to this king, so jealous of his authority, a perpetual menace.

The Saviour, seeing so formidable a storm brewing over Him, sought the other side of the lake, which is close by the territory of Philip, in order to evade His pursuers if they should become too relentless in their attacks.[21] These safeguards having been taken, He did not cease to receive kindly those who followed Him into this retreat, and to heal the sick; but He did not do so without caution, warning them not to make it known. So He waited, before taking up His ministry again openly, until Herod's changeable nature should be diverted to some other more absorbing subject.

The obscure existence which for prudence sake Jesus led during this threatening period astonished and shocked the first converts among the Jews. Doubtless they recoiled from the idea that the Messiah should be forced to hide Himself and to work in the darkness; for we find Saint Matthew reminding them that

19 Luke vi. 11. 20 Mark iii. 6. 21 Mark iii. 7.

these humiliations had been long since set down in the oracles of Isaiah:[22] "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen, My Beloved, in whom My Soul hath been well pleased! I will send My Spirit to rest upon Him, and He shall publish My judgments unto the nations. He shall not be contentious, He shall not cry aloud, and no man shall hear His voice in the open streets; the bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench, until He triumphs in the strife."

CHAPTER II

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Mark iii. 7–15; Luke vi. 12–19; Matt. x. 2–4

During this retirement of the Lord the fury of His pursuers slackened; soon He was free to appear openly among men. "A great throng followed Him out of Galilee, Jerusalem, Iudmea,[1] and from the country beyond the Jordan; and others from round about Tyre and Sidon, having heard what things He did, came to Him in great numbers. Then He told His disciples to have a boat ready for Him, so that He might not be overwhelmed by the multitudes; for He had healed so very many that it resulted in all those who had any illness pressing upon Him to touch Him; and the unclean spirits when they saw Him fell at His feet crying out: "Thou art the Son of God!" And he charged them, with great threats, that they should not make Him known."

Here we find the Lord in His ministry bearing Himself just as we have seen Him hitherto at Capharnaum, consecrating His days by turns to the instruction of the people, to the healing of the sick, and to the deliverance of the possessed.

After one such day of wearisome labour, Jesus "withdrew to a mountain, and there spent the whole night in prayer."[2] Certain traditions single out a hill lying between Capharnaum and Tiberias as the scene of this night watch and of the sermon which follows upon it. The Christians call it the Mount of the Beatitudes; the Arabs' name for it is Kourn Hattin (the Horns of Hattin), in allusion to the two peaks which rise above the village of that name. To the west the hillside slopes gently up from the rolling meadows; to the east, on the contrary, its steep cliffs overlook a level stretch of ground, big and wide enough to hold a great multitude.[3] In the hill country bordering this side of lake we might seek in vain for any other highlands worthy the name of mountain. So, then, this is the spot to which we must follow the Lord.

At all times Jesus loved the lonely heights, the quiet of evening, the midnight sky with its glittering array of heavenly hosts; in the stillness His glance could pierce the depths until it was absorbed in the vision of the Father; here unhindered His soul could taste of that mysterious rest which is born of prayerful ecstasy. Yet this one night out on the hilltops had, in truth, something of a more solemn glory in it; we feel by the very words in which Saint Luke speaks

22 Matt. xii. 17–21; Is. xlii. 1–4.
1 Mark iii. 7–12.
2 Luke vi. 12.
3 Luke vi. 17.

of it that it was to be the forerunner of a great day. In the dawning light Jesus called to Him His disciples, who were slumbering, as we may fancy, at no great distance, and "from among them He chose out twelve, to whom He gave the name of apostles." [4]

The Master by this act, to all outward seeming so simple, there and then laid the massive foundations of a work which was destined to be seen of all men and to withstand the fiercest onslaught of the foe. Growing ever more majestic upon our vision as we watch her progress down through the ages, we must recall to mind the while how this heavensent Church, built up under the Master Workman's hand, had for its mighty base simply these twelve apostles. At that time there was nothing about them to mark them from the masses; we have seen and we have still to see for a long time to come, how ignorant they were, how ambitious, so much more engrossed in the things of the flesh than in the things of the spirit. But the Hand which had gathered together from out the dark quarries of earth these rough and heavy blocks by the same supernal strength could cut and polish them. So Saint John once saw in the bulwarks of the heavenly Jerusalem just such huge bulks of stone, hewn from the shapeless rock; and these same were become twelve precious stones,[5] whose glowing depths of color now uphold the glorious city of our God, our holy habitation in the Heavens.

Was there any thought in Jesus' mind of the symbolic significance in the number He had chosen? Did He mean in this way to recall those twelve tribes of Israel, just as the high priest used to bear upon his breast twelve great gems as a memorial of them? Many such conjectures have been hazarded, and indeed there is good ground for similar concepts when we think how much stress was laid on the hidden meaning of numbers in olden times. The pagans were not alone in their belief that strange properties were to be found in such combinations; the Jews, and the first Fathers of the Church as well, scrutinise them with careful curiosity; and it is impossible to deny that very many of the numbers in Scripture itself have a mystic purport. So that we have in this way really a secret language, highly prized by those who are versed in its unique charms — like the full harmony which sustains the song by setting its pure melody in higher relief. Why should Jesus have scorned this feeling? Rather He deigned to make use of it; and thus, in this point as in so many others, He availed Himself of every usage of the world about Him. We may willingly grant, not only that He did not choose this number without a purpose, but that He attached so much importance to it that His disciples felt that their first duty, after the Ascension, was to complete the roll of the apostolic college by the election of Saint Matthias.[6]

Of the twelve apostles seven had been chosen already. These were: Peter and Andrew, the two sons of Jonas; then the sons of Zebedee, James and John; Philip, who came from Bethsaïda, like the first four; Bartholomew, from Cana in Galilee; [7] and Matthew, the publican. Jesus now called five others: His

4 Luke vi. 13; Mark iii. 14.
5 Apoc. xxi. 19–21.
6 Acts i. 15–26.
7 John xxi. 2.

two cousins, James the Less and Jude (Lebbeus, or Thaddeus); the Galileans, Thomas and Simon the Zealot; finally, the traitor — the man from Kerioth in Judea — Judas, son of Simon. For the most part we know little enough of these apostles — their names, some few words spoken by them, certain deeds of theirs mentioned in the Gospels or the Acts, a number of traditions as to their after life — altogether hardly enough to furnish us with materials for a sketch of each one of them.

Bartholomew is the least known of all. It has been agreed upon that he is the Nathaniel whom Philip found meditating under a figtree, and led to his divine Master.[8] Truthfulness and godliness were the keynotes of his character; undoubtedly with these he combined modesty, for from that hour in which he obeyed the call of God we never see or hear anything more of the son of Tolmaï. There is a tradition which tells of his having evangelised the Indies; that he was burned alive, and crucified with his head downwards.

His friend Philip was among the first of the Galileans who were moved to seek John the Baptist, hoping to find in him the longed-for Messiah. The Gospel speaks of his gentle spirit, readily responding to Jesus' appeals,[9] sympathising with the distress of the throngs that followed the Master into the desert, but slow to believe that a few loaves would be enough to satisfy them; [10] slower still to fathom the mysteries of faith, for even at the Last Supper he begs the Saviour to let him see the Father, of whom He is always speaking.[11] Polycratus, Bishop of Ephesus, informs us that Philip had been married; his daughters were numbered among the first virgins; and he himself slept in the Lord at Hierapolis, in Phrygia.

As to Simon, we merely know that he was called the Cananean, a name which Saint Luke translates as the Zealot; [12] and this term was also used to distinguish him from Simon Peter. Can it be that this apostle belonged to that famous sect which revenged every transgression of the Law, not simply with burning reproaches, like the prophets of old, but like Phineas, with unsheathed sword? [13] We know what part these Zealots played in the last days of Jerusalem; how they became the terror and scourge of the whole countryside, making it reek with blood, spreading ruin and death on every hand. Would Jesus have called one of these fanatics to Him? Would He have thought it wise to admit into equal fellowship this Jew, Simon, who rebelled against every tribute extorted by the hated foreigners, and Levi, collector of the Roman taxes? Yet in this there would be nothing repugnant to the plans of the Master, for He made little account of human prudence in His works, and "chose that which is foolishness in the world's eyes to confound the wise, so that no man should glorify himself before Him." [14]

Matthew has left behind him more than a name — a divine book, his Gospel. In it he speaks in one single instance of himself, and that is only to tell us that he was a publican, a butt for the contempt and hatred of Israel, but that nevertheless Jesus chose him.

8 John i. 47.
9 John i. 43.
10 John vi. 7.
11 John xiv. 8.
12 Luke vi. 15.
13 Num. xxv. 7.
14 1 Cor. i. 27.

Thomas's character may be more clearly deciphered. With a frank, practical spirit, which was easily bewildered by the mysteries of faith, he declared with perfect simplicity, even in the very midst of the Last Supper, that he could not understand the words of the Lord.[15]

"Master," said he, "we do not know where you are going, nor which way the road lies."

After all Jesus' ministry was finished, after all His miracles, Thomas had not become grounded in the firm faith that He was God; after the Resurrection we see him still unable to put trust in this new wonder — dejected, despairing, demanding that the Master permit him to touch his wounds with his hands before he would believe.[16] And notwithstanding, he had a generous heart; for when Jesus braved the wrath of the Jews face to face, that He might raise up Lazarus from the dead, it was Thomas who incited the apostles with those words which all our martyrs have repeated after him:

"Come, let us also go and die with Him!" [17]

James and Jude, the two sons of Alpheus and Mary, we have already seen at their home in Nazareth. Throughout the whole ministry of Jesus they continued to be just what they were then — hard-working mechanics, whose minds were filled with longings for earthly goods. It needed the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost to transform these kinsmen of the Lord into apostles, to inspire Jude with that mighty Epistle of his, and to make of James the Less one of the most illustrious bishops of the newborn Church.

As pastor of Jerusalem during nearly thirty years, the latter fostered and strengthened the perfect good will which bound the pagan and Jewish converts together; at the first Council he suggested the wisest resolutions, and it was he who protected Saint Paul against the unreasoning and fanatic partisans of Judaism. All Jews who became Christians held this servant of God in veneration as their leader, and cherished with deep respect his Epistle, addressed "to the twelve tribes dispersed throughout the world," [18] in which the apostle scourges the vices of his fellow countrymen, their strifes, their haughty and grasping character. The later years of James were passed in prayer; kneeling whole days and nights together in the Temple, he delayed by his intercession the ruin which overhung Jerusalem like a dark storm cloud; indeed, he was "the rampart of his people," according to a common saying among his contemporaries. His death was worthy of such a life. At the festival of the Pasch, the high priest Ananias and the Council of the Sanhedrin commanded him to exhort the Jews to give up their faith in Jesus. The holy old man allowed them to lead him out upon one of the galleries of the Temple, and promised them he would speak to the people, but it was only that he might seize one last chance to glorify his Master.

"Wherefore would you question me concerning Jesus?" he cried out. "He is seated at the right hand of the Almighty, and will appear again upon the clouds of Heaven."

15 John xiv. 5.
16 John xx. 25.
17 John xi. 16.
18 James i. 1.

His furious persecutors fell upon him and threw him down upon the pavement below, and there they stoned him. As he was dying, the aged apostle drew himself up, and remained kneeling long enough to beseech God to forgive his executioners; whereupon a man who had armed himself with a fuller's mallet strode up and put an end to his sufferings. His people buried him close by the Temple. Eight years later, Jerusalem was only a charred heap of ashes.

And now we have still to speak of the most illustrious of the apostles — Simon and Andrew, sons of Jonas; James and John, the sons of Zebedee. These four fishermen of Bethsaïda form a group by themselves, and at their head we always find the Prince of the Apostles, Simon Peter. The least known one among them is Andrew, whose personality is, as it were, overshadowed by his brother's brilliant renown. After having brought Simon to Jesus,[19] he disappears in the background. But if his life was hidden, his death shed such radiance about it, that the priests and deacons of Achaia sent tidings of the glorious event to the whole Church. Their narrative enables us to follow, step by step, every act of the martyr — the examination, the replies of Andrew, and his protracted tortures. He died upon the cross, uttering such cries of love for Jesus as thrilled the hearts of those through whose soul the sound reechoed, while they wept in silence.

Beside Andrew, there are Peter, James, and John, who are always the chosen ones among the chosen few, the intimate companions whom the Master admitted to His confidence and familiar friendship. We see them, the only ones present at the raising of Jaïrus's daughter; the only ones at the Transfiguration; the only ones at the Agony of the Saviour. Jesus has told us what made Him so particularly attached to the two sons of Zebedee; it was because their great hearts burned in fierce flashes, like the lightning; whence it was that He gave them that beautiful name— "sons of the Thunderbolt" — Boanerges.[20] They had something of its resistless rush, and sometimes, too, its destructive wrath. Witness the day when they called down the fire of heaven upon a Samaritan village which refused to harbour them. They had inherited this unbounded zeal from Salome, their mother. Having devoted herself to the Saviour's cause, faithfully following Him even to His Cross, the wife of Zebedee the fisherman dared to dream of a place for her sons at the side of Christ, and upon His throne.[21] Jesus tried to curb this ambition by reminding them that His glory was to be bought at the price of suffering.

"Can you drink of My chalice?" He asked.

"That we can," instantly replied the sons of Salome.

This confidence touched the Lord; and it was then He granted to James that, before all others, he should not only drink this cup of sorrow but that he should drain it in a single draught. His zeal marked him out for a victim to the sword of Herod Agrippa, and he in fact was the first of the apostles to meet the martyr's death.[22]

The other son of Salome was to survive them all. Soaring above the earth, to

19 John i. 41.
20 Mark iii. 17.
21 Matt. xx. 22, 23.
22 Acts xii. 2.

the inaccessible heights of his heavenly home, he led a hidden life so long as Peter and Paul held the Christian word in the bonds of faith. But at the end of the first century, when the witness of the holy Word had vanished one by one, and when heresy threatened the youthful Church, the voice of John pierced the cloud. His Gospel, the Epistle which announced it, and the Apocalypse, were like so many sheets of lightning, now dazzling our sight, now thrilling us with peals of thunder, now binding our eyes when we would descry the outlines of his lawful visions: the showers of fire and of blood; the cups of gold overflowing with wrath; the steeds, with serpents for their manes and tails, having breastplates of fire, breathing out flame and brimstone; the red dragon, with the seven heads and the ten horns, drawing together with his tail a third part of the stars of the sky, and hurling them down upon the earth.[23] Thus it was, with a loud voice, that the seer of Patmos was constrained to reveal the great matter of his ecstasies. Christian art has been prone to sink these raptures of the apostle into the shadow, and so we are too apt to forget them; painting has rather accorded him every grace of youth, with his eyes lifted up to the heavens, often with an almost virginal timidity. Undoubtedly "the disciple whom Jesus loved" [24] had great tenderness of heart, but it was a heart which throbbed in unison with a soul of fire; and it was this latter trait which won for him the Master's love when He called him, "son of the Thunder"; and in like manner it moves us most strongly when we see the apostle drawing away in horror from the heretic Cerinthus, and filling the Apocalypse with those terrible mysterious images. John's rightful emblem is not the Dove, but the Eagle. This passionate ardour, penetrated with deepest tenderness, drew to him the Heart of Jesus, and made John the beloved disciple.

The character of Simon, son of Jonas, presents no such opposite traits. It is all summed up in the name which Jesus bestowed on him: "Thou are Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church." [25] The great apostle, therefore, was to serve as the foundation of the church — was to be for his brethren as a guide and infallible Head. And after the election of the twelve, the Lord made known these prerogatives of Peter so publicly and so emphatically, in order that all might bow before him. Ever after this day we find him speaking and acting in their name. At Capharnaum, where the Master demanded sadly, "And you — will you too go away?" [26] it was he who responded, in the name of all the rest,

"Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life!"

It was he who, at Cæsarea, in the land of Philip, once again proclaimed the faith of the Apostles,

"Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [27]

This lofty dignity conferred upon him became the occasion of his fall; it puffed him up with vainglory, turned his energy into presumption, his firmness into blind obstinacy; it went so far as to make him openly contradict his Master, and drew down upon him that severe reply,

23 Apoc. viii. 7; xv. 7; ix. 17–19; xii. 3, 4.
24 John xiii. 23.
25 Matt. xvi. 18.
26 John vi. 68–70.
27 Matt. xvi. 16.

"Get thee gone, Satan! thou art a scandal unto Me, for thy thoughts are not of God, but of man." [28]

At the close of the ministry of Jesus, Simon, son of Jonas, is not any longer the immovable rock, but like a loose stone in the road, which a woman's hand may fling aside into the ditch. Yet even then it was not all over with Peter, since after his overthrow he but made for himself a surer abiding place, and in sorrow found firmer foundations. Overwhelmed with his humiliation, he nevertheless rose up in "the greatness of the power of God." [29] Henceforth, neither his faith nor his mighty courage were ever to fail him; we encounter him everywhere at the head of his brethren, the first to grope his way within the tomb of Jesus, and to gaze upon his Risen Lord; the first to get into the little ship at that last miraculous draught of fishes; the first to cast himself into the sea, to go to meet the Saviour first, too, to drag up on the shore the net, which had not broken beneath the weight of its one hundred and fifty-three fishes.[30]

Before He went away from their sight into the skies, Jesus laid upon Peter the charge of pasturing His flock, to feed His sheep, as well as His lambs.[31] The apostle fulfilled the command of the Lord, stood at their head, ordered their manner of teaching and the form of their government, and by stamping the newborn Faith with his seal, gave it the character which it was to bear unto all future ages, making the first acts of the infant Church the acts of Peter.

In the apostolic college there is still one gloomy figure left, which each of the Evangelists thrusts down to the lowermost rank — Judas, son of Simon, the man from Kerioth. Jesus asked only one apostle from Judea, and Judea gave Him a traitor. All that we know of him, apart from the tale of his treachery is that his skill in the management of money won him his position of trust as treasurer of the apostles.[32] Hence he must have gained their confidence from the outset; and indeed he retained it up to that last Passover, for it was at his instigation that they murmured against the Magdalene, as she poured out her perfumes upon the head of Jesus. Though he grew ever more depraved and desperate, the man from Kerioth had always succeeded in blinding their eyes; so that on the night of the Last Supper, when the Lord foretold the crime in whose shadow they sat, no one dreamed of charging Judas with it; only the calm glance of Jesus could read the heart of the thief. How many were the words spoken by the Saviour to the multitude which in the ears of this faithless follower must have resounded in tones of appeal or reproach! Now He is urging them to true charity: "Do not heap up treasures upon the earth. . . . There, where your heart is, there is your treasure also . . . You cannot serve God and Mammon." [33] Now He gives utterance to His feeling of horror: "Have I not chosen you twelve? And there is one among you who is a devil!" [34] The divine Master could not resolve to abandon "this son of perdition." [35] At Gethsemani, once more, He kissed him, and called him His friend.[36]

28 Matt. xvi. 23.
29 2 Cor. iv. 7.
30 John xx. 6; Luke xxiv. 34; John xxi. 1–11.
31 John xxi. 15–17.
32 John xii. 1–7.
33 Matt. vi. 19, 21, 24.
34 John vi. 71, 72.
35 John xvii. 12.
36 Matt. xxvi. 50.

Composed of such different characters, the college of the apostles stands before us, from all we can know of its members. Henceforward they were to form a little band of chosen ones about the Saviour, journeying with Him throughout Judea, sharing His labours and His repasts; like Him, they had not where to rest their heads, and often laid themselves down by His side without other roof than the starry heavens, with no shelter save the providence of God their Father.

CHAPTER III

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matt. v., vi., vii.; Luke vi. 20–49

Christian orators have always delighted in contrasting Moses upon cloud-capped Sinai with Jesus promulgating the New Law upon the Mount of the Beatitudes. On the one hand we see Jehovah wrapped in dazzling mists, that flash and thunder before His awful Presence; and on the other, in the quiet of early morning, we hear a Voice whose beloved accents thrill the people's heart. Of old there was the dread hush of the desert; no water was there, nor any green thing — only the red-litten peaks rising high above desolate mountain crags; but here we have every charm of a springtime in Galilee, the soft slopes of a little hill looking down upon sunny pasture lands, while the sparkling lake of Genesareth ripples along the shore; in a word, yonder was the Law of death, delivered to a disobedient and awestruck nation; here the law of grace is announced to the believing and joyous throngs.

Beneath such poetic parallels is there really any underlying truth? Can the sermon on the mount be set side by side with the tables of stone, graven by the hand of Jehovah, or in point of fact, did Jesus actually present it to us as a code of Christianity? There is nothing to prove that this discourse, as preserved by Saint Matthew, had any such distinctive character; that the Evangelist made choice of this one in particular was because no other seemed to him better fitted to convey an idea of the Master's teaching. Indeed Jesus could not have found any more favourable opportunity for disclosing His doctrine. . Up to this time He never had had gathered about Him an audience having knowledge enough of heavenly things to enable them to understand Him; later on, being surrounded by spies, He had not the same liberty, and was often forced to use mystical language and to speak in parables. But at the time of the sermon on the Mount the Saviour's enemies were not tracking His footsteps so closely as to hound Him through every secluded spot like this; they were content to keep watch upon Him in the towns and synagogues. Freed for the time being from the hunter's pursuit, and speaking to people who were wholly devoted to Him, Jesus could ease His overflowing heart, and reveal in its fulness the light He had brought into the world. The sermon on the Mount, although quite similar in form to other of the Saviour's instructions, has been chosen, however,

for very good reasons, as being the completest expression of the doctrine of Christianity and a brief epitome of the Gospel.

We possess two accounts of it — Saint Luke's summary, written for the pagan converts, which contains no allusion to Judaic customs; and the text of Saint Matthew, in which the Master's words are reflected as in a clear and spotless mirror. In the latter record the whole scene about Him as He preached lives again before our eyes: the meadows dotted over with brilliant lilies, the thornbush thickets, the rich greenery of the vines, figtrees growing alongside the thistles, birds flitting across the clear blue sky, while over yonder, around the doors of those humble cottages, you can see the cattle grazing, or at rest; there are fishermen coming up from the neighbouring shores of the lake — men who would be horrified at the thought of giving their children a serpent instead of a fish.[1] From the highlands of Kourn Hattin, at one time, the Saviour could point out on the distant horizon some city built upon a hill; [2] then again, close at hand, in the little hamlets among the mountains, He could remind these villagefolk how the savourless salt is thrown out into the street,[3] or He would picture them a scene within the walls of their farmhouses, recalling the single flaring torch which they were accustomed to light at evening, hanging it over the heaps of grain so as to measure them off bushel by bushel; and from this He took occasion to say: "You are the light of the world; no one lights a lamp in order to put it under a bushel, but to set it within its socket, so that it may illumine the whole house; thus let your light shine before men." [4]

By describing time and place so minutely, Saint Matthew lets us know that he was one of the listeners to the heavenly discourse on this occasion; but need we conclude from this that he has given us every word uttered by the Lord on that great day! The most learned expounders have always held the opposite opinion, and everything sustains their theory — the concise expression of the ideas, the abundance of maxims, the brusque transitions, the parables and the similitudes but barely suggested; indeed, the divine Master was not accustomed to speak in such style. Suiting His words to the comprehension of the simple, earnest minds of His hearers, He would repeat one thought over and over again, putting it before them under a new form each time until it was fully grasped; thus He followed no order, save only such as was prompted by a Heart which would sacrifice everything to its one longing to be known and loved. For Saint Matthew to recount these homilies word for word would have been to go beyond the scope of his Gospel, since we know that Jesus was never too tired to prolong His instructions while there were souls who needed His help. The evangelist has chosen rather to select such sayings of the Master as he deemed best adapted to represent His teaching.

Of all the words that fell from His lips on that day none were more strange and surprising in their tenor than the Beatitudes proclaimed by the Saviour; for every prejudice of Israel was overthrown by them. In truth, Moses, by making use of material images to move this worldly minded people, had thought to

1 Matt. vi. 28, vii. 16, vi. 26, vii. 6, vii. 9, 10.
2 Matt. v. 14.
3 Matt. v. 13.
4 Matt. v. 15, 16.

reach their hearts by setting before their eyes the earthly rewards of righteousness, and had promised Israel that its glory or its shame would finally depend upon its faithfulness to Jehovah. The Jews had concluded from this that prosperity always attends upon the godly man; that wealth being a mark of God's favour, sorrow and trouble are sure tokens of His wrath. Hence arose despite the spirit of charity which breathes throughout the Law, that scorn of poverty and their harsh usage of the unfortunate and sick, whom they regarded as sinners meeting with a just punishment; hence too they imbibed their mistaken ideas as to the Messiah, who was to raise up their nation to the pinnacle of glory and riches.

Few were the words which Jesus used to dispel such dreams as these. Instead of wealth He set before these Jews the happiness of the poor; to the passionate spirits whose visions are all of great victories He speaks of meekness; tells the hearts in love with pleasure that there is joy in the gift of tears; to the hungry and thirsty, He says that righteousness shall sustain them; preaches mercy to the pitiless natures, the loveliness of purity to the sensual man; teaches the blessedness of the peaceful and long-suffering to a people writhing beneath their yoke. What a disenchantment for the mighty ones of this world! But for the poor and the lowly of earth was there ever revelation so unhoped for? Only consider for a moment how dreadful their destitution was, even here in Israel; think of the oppressions endured by the weak and gentle; imagine the despair of those whom misfortune had overcome, who had no one to wipe away their tears; and remembering this we can understand the joy of wretched and weary souls when they heard the Christ speaking these words to them: [5]

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, because to them belongeth the Kingdom of Heaven.[6]

"Blessed are those who weep, because they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, because they shall possess the land.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, because they shall have their fill.

"Blessed are the merciful, because they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, because they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are those who are pure of heart, because they shall see God.

"Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice sake, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

Seeing the Master destroy so many of their illusions, the Jews might well believe he wished to revolutionise all Israel; and indeed this is why He was so careful to add that His mission was not to abolish the Law, but to elevate it to the point of perfection.[7] Moses had said: "Thou shalt not kill"; Jesus would even forbid angry words and feelings of hatred.[8] Moses denounced adultery; Jesus condemned an impure glance or an evil thought.[9] Moses tolerated di-

5 Matt. v. 3–12.

6 The Kingdom of Heaven is the name which the contemporaries of Jesus always used in alluding to the reign of the Messiah. St. Luke prefers to give a form which would be clearer to the minds of the Gentiles,—"The Kingdom of God."

7 Matt. v. 17–19.

8 Matt. v. 21–26.

9 Matt. v. 27–30.

vorce; Jesus restored marriage to its primitive sanctity.[10] It was written in the Law, "Thou shall not perjure thyself, but thou shall perform thine oaths unto the Lord." [11]

"And now," spoke the Christ, "I say to you: Do not swear at all, neither by Heaven nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem. Let your speech be: 'This is so,' 'That is not so' — 'Yes,' 'No.' Everything which is more than this comes from an evil source."

"You have heard that it has been said: 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' [12] And now I say to you: Do not withstand violence; but if any one strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other. And if any one wish to enter into judgment with you, and contend with you for your tunic, let him take your mantle also. And if any one force you to go one mile, go with him two miles more. Give to whoever asks, nor rebuff him who would borrow of you."

Still these divine instructions lacked somewhat of fulfilling the ancient Law in its perfectness. To completely develop its germ of life, and to make it bear the fruits of grace, it was necessary that Jesus should shatter the close and narrow circle within which the Jews had confined it; therefore He must first work a change in their feelings toward other nations. Moses, knowing the weakness of His people had prohibited any commerce with idolators; the Jewish doctors had turned this precaution into an odious precept, looked upon every foreigner as an enemy, and wrote down such ruthless dicta as were afterwards to find a place in the Talmud: "Have no pity upon Gentiles." "The pagan is not our neighbour." Against this Law of hate, Jesus pleaded for charity, which finds its brothers in all mankind, and in God their common Father.[13]

"Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; pray for those who maltreat you and slander you, in order that you may be the children of your heavenly Father, who makes His sun rise upon the good and upon the bad, and sends down rain upon the just and unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward shall you merit? Do not the publicans as much? And if you greet your brethren only, what more are you doing? Do not pagans the same? Be you therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

How differently the Law sounded, listening to the Lord's simple reading of it, and contrasting it with the hypocritical practices which the Pharisees had miscalled the Law! Jesus denounced these sectaries, zealous to preserve a decorous outside, but caring naught for the corruption and malice seething in their own hearts,[14] sounding trumpets when they gave alms to publish their virtues before the world, disfiguring themselves to make a show of their fasts before men, haughtily standing up and praying with a loud voice in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets.

"Do not imitate them," said the Saviour, "for your Father knows of what you have need before you ask it of Him. As for you, pray thus: [15]

"Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name;

10 Matt. v. 31–32.
11 Matt. v. 33–37.
12 Matt. v. 38–42.
13 Matt. v. 43–48.
14 Matt. vi. 1–8.
15 Matt. vi. 9–13.

"Thy Kingdom come;
"Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven;
"Give us this day our daily bread;
"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
"And lead us not into temptation;
"But deliver us from evil."

Nothing could show better than this prayer how Jesus would change the sons of Israel into a new people by diverting their desires from earth and raising them to Heaven, by proposing nobler ends as the rewards of righteousness. Undoubtedly Heaven existed for the Jew just as it does for us today, yet he never lifted his eyes on high, but looked for his recompense here below. The disciple of Jesus, taught to long after celestial goods, spurns such as are the creatures of time; for his thoughts are all fixed on incorruptible and eternal things. In this new realm of the Spirit he does not fail to fulfil all the duties of life, nor to endure its trials. He fasts as formerly,[16] but with a serene countenance, seeking to attain by mortification to a real detachment from worldly feelings, and to a completer union with God. He prays, but it is in secret he communes with the Father; he distributes alms, but without letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing. With toil and trouble he seeks his daily bread, yet without uneasiness or anxiety, without clinging to the treasures which rust can corrode and thieves filch away; not like the Jews seeking to share his heart between God and mammon, but rather putting all his trust in the Providence of the Father, he relishes, through all their loveliness, something of the holy Truth of his Master's words: [17]

"Be not harassed about your life, what to eat or what to drink, nor for your body as to how you shall be clothed. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment?

"Look up at the birds in the sky: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into granaries, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you much more than they?

"And which one of us by disquieting himself can add another moment to his life's allotted span?

"Why are you solicitous as to your raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and nevertheless I say to you not Solomon himself in all his glory was ever arrayed like one of these wild flowers.

"If then, this grass of the fields, which is today, and tomorrow will be cast into the oven, God doth attire after this sort, how much more shall He do unto you, O ye men of little faith?

"Do not be troubled therefore, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or 'Wherewith shall we be clothed?' The pagans seek after these things, but your Father knows that you have need of them.

"Then seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all those things shall be given you, added unto them.

16 Matt. vi. 16-24. 17 Matt. vi. 25, 34.

"Be not anxious concerning the morrow. The morrow shall be anxious for itself. Unto each day its own evil suffices."

To these instructions, which were the striking features of the discourse, Saint Matthew adds certain precepts, given by the Saviour at the same time. It is difficult to find the link which bound together these thoughts and images of widely different nature; probably it is useless to seek any connection of the kind, the design of the evangelist being, not to present us with a body of doctrine, but to preserve such few sentences as still lingered fresh in his memory.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. . . . Give, and it shall be given to you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they shall pour into your bosom." [18] Hereupon the Lord speaks of the two blind men, one of whom cannot lead the other without both falling into the ditch; of the mote and the beam; [19] of the pearls put before swine; of the door opened wide to whosoever knocketh earnestly. "Who is the man among you who gives his son a stone when he asks for bread? And if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, wicked though you be, willingly give to your children of the good things which are given to you, how much more will your Father who is in Heaven give truly good gifts to them that have recourse unto Him!" [20] Then, as the Master's thoughts follow one upon the other in swift sequence, we see the smooth and spacious highroad which sweeps on to perdition; the little gateway and the narrow path [21] which lead to life; there are the false prophets clad in sheep's clothing, whom you may recognise as you test a tree by its good or bad fruits. Finally we find the true and the false disciples of the Christ — "All those who say, 'Lord! Lord!' shall not for that reason enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who doeth the will of My Father who is in Heaven he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." [22]

Jesus terminated these teachings with a striking figure. He had before His mind one of those sheltered ravines which had cut deep into the flanks of some mountainside, while its floor is strewn with rocks and sand. For the Oriental there is every temptation to build here in the bed of dried-up torrents; he has little more to do than to stoop and collect together the smooth stones; it costs but a little labour after that to level away the sand and erect his home. And yet, woe to the imprudent fellow who lets himself be seduced by the seeming security and safety of this sheltered spot, where no toil is needed to the making of his dwelling! Beneath those southern skies storms burst forth in an instant, emptying streams of water down upon the mountaintops; then of a sudden these parched channels which wind through the gorges are transformed into raging torrents once more. Before the mighty onrush of the waters everything is crumbled, crushed, and whirled away in confusion. It were wisdom to dig one's solid habitation deep and strong among the higher rocks; there, raised upon its firm base, his home can defy the fury of tempest and floods.

"Whoever," said the Lord,[23] "hears these My words and puts them in practice I will show you to whom he is like.

18 Matt. vii. 1–2; Luke vi. 38.
19 Matt. vii. 3–8.
20 Matt. vii. 9–12.
21 Matt. vii. 13, 14.
22 Matt. vii. 21–23.
23 Matt. vii. 24–27.

"He is like to a man who builded a house, and having dug deep beforehand, sets its foundations upon the rock.

"The rains fall, the floods come, the winds blow and beat about this house; but it has not fallen, because it is founded on the rock.

"And he who hears these words which I speak and does not put them in practice is like a foolish man who has built his house upon the sand.

"The rains fall, the floods come, the winds blow and beat about this house, and it has fallen, and its ruin has been great."

Such was the Sermon on the Mount. With deep respect we may thus gather together all that Saint Matthew and Saint Luke have remembered and recorded; but there is that which they were unable to set down here — the heavenly accents of the Master and the grace which exhaled from His lips. The listening throngs were touched with wondering rapture.[24] That which charmed them more than all besides was that He spoke and "taught as one having authority, and not as their scribes." Never before, indeed, had Israel hearkened to language like this; they no longer heard teaching like that of their doctors — a dry and heartless code of ethics, unending disputes about trivial subjects; here was no strained or tedious interpretation of the Law, no slavish attachment to the dead letter. Everything about Jesus bespoke the sovereign Master of the hearts of men lifting them up toward the Truth, yet without wrenching them away from earth; the loftiest subjects were set before them in such homely phrases that the lowly folk and their little ones could grasp His meaning. He spoke to the villagers of life in the open fields, of trees in fruit or with barren boughs of wild flowers and of the mountain torrents; to the fisherman He spoke of their lake or of their nets; to all He told of what they knew and loved, and they all, bending forward with rapt and breathless interest, followed the Word in wonder and delight.

CHAPTER IV

CAPHARNAUM AND NAÏM

I. The Centurion of Capharnaum

Luke vii. 1–10; Matt. viii. 1, 5–13

Accompanied by a great concourse, Jesus descended the mountain and returned to Capharnaum.[1] He went thither to experience the joy of welcoming the first pagan who was to come to Him — one of the noblest souls of whom the Gospel makes any mention. He was a Roman centurion, commanding the detachment of legionaries stationed upon the borders of the lake. Galilee, though it was under Herod's rule, remained nevertheless under the overlordship of vigilant Roman governors; and Capharnaum was too important a posi-

24 Matt. vii. 28, 29.

1 Matt. viii. 1; Luke vii. 1.

tion for the masters of the world to neglect to occupy it. The officer charged with representing the Empire here was worthy of that trust — resolute in his biddings, keeping his soldiers under perfect discipline at the same time he was not so much the overseer as he was the protector of Capharnaum. We know that he had been more than a little drawn toward the worship of Jehovah; for this pagan, who had remained upright and clean of heart in the midst of Roman corruption, could not have known the religion of the Jews without being touched by its pure morality, and to this he had himself borne witness publicly, by having a synagogue built in the town. With this high tone of mind he combined certain feelings of humanity, which were certainly rare enough at that period. There is no one who does not know what sort of a position the slave held in ancient days; he was a machine with a human voice — a beast of burden, taken care of only in order to obtain a few years' longer service. Should he grow old and sick, it were the wisest course, according to certain most illustrious philosophers, "to sell him along with the old cattle and rusty scrapiron." [2] Yet this centurion, when we see him first, is leaning over the pillow of his old servant, watching and weeping; "for he loved him much." [3]

His grief, being known throughout Capharnaum, had moved his numerous friends to come to him, and they were gathered about the sick man, who was now racked with fierce agonies; death was drawing near. In this extremity the centurion learned of Jesus' return, and recalled all he had heard said of Him; yet not daring to hope that Israel's benefactor would listen to a pagan, he turned towards the ancients of Capharnaum, and asked them to intercede for him.

The latter, remembering only their debt of gratitude, set out in search of the Saviour, and besought His aid.

"This man deserves that you should assist him," they said, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

Jesus acceded immediately to their request.

"I will go," He replied, "and I will heal Him."

He followed after them, and as He was nearing the house they informed the centurion of His approach. The Roman's surprise was great, for he had never expected to receive Him in his home, knowing that in the eyes of the Pharisees one who entered a heathen's dwelling was defiled. Desiring to spare the youthful Prophet such disgrace, he despatched some of his friends, bearing this message:

"Lord, do not give yourself so much trouble, for I am not worthy that you should enter into my house. It was for this reason I dared not go to you; but say only one word and my servant shall be healed."

Then he himself, if we follow the text of Saint Matthew, came forward to meet the divine Master, and upon the threshold of his mansion besought Him, as his only gift, to vouchsafe one single word from His mouth. Accustomed to command, he knew the power of a word.

"I, who obey another," he said, "have nevertheless soldiers under me, and I

2 Cato. 3 Luke vii. 2.

say to one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my servant 'Do this,' and he does it."

Hearing him speak, Jesus was filled with admiration, and turning to the company who had followed Him, He said:

"Of a truth I have not found any so great faith, even in Israel."

Praise like this, which exalted a heathen above the sons of Abraham, probably gave rise to some bitter murmurings of disapproval; it may even be that the Lord had discerned some of the Sanhedrin's spies mingling with the crowd, for all at once His language grew threatening. The Jews had pictured for themselves the reign of the Messiah as it were a banqueting-board spread before them, and them alone; and they were fond of representing the confusion of the Gentiles, doomed only to gaze from afar upon their sumptuous repasts.

The divine Master recalled this haughty dream in order to destroy it, and declared that pagans coming from the East and from the West would sit down to table by the side of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the heavens; while the Jews, though children of the Kingdom of Heaven, would be cast without the festal hall into the blackness of night. "There shall be weeping and grinding of teeth." [4]

Turning then to the centurion, "Go," He said, "and may it be done unto even as you have believed." And the servant was healed.

The centurion of Capharnaum remains unto this day as the consummate copy set before every soul that seeks God. By praising his humility and faith the Lord has shown us that thus it behoves us to come unto Him. Of this the Church has been ever mindful; and since that time no one draws near the table where Jesus gives us Himself to be our Bread of Life without first rekindling in his heart the feelings of this great Captain, murmuring with reverent lips:

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but speak only one word and my soul shall be healed."

II. The Son of the Widow of Naïm

Luke vii. 11–17

Jesus lingered only a little while at Capharnaum; on the next day — so runs the record of Saint Luke; — He had travelled some nine leagues thence, and had come to the town of Naïm. There was nothing unusual about this rapid journey; for, by starting in the evening, a boat could soon bring Him over to the southern shore of the lake, and leaving there about sunrise He would reach the place for which He was bound easily before nightfall.

Naïm of today — a poor little village — has preserved no tokens of her past, except her girdle of tombs; there is nothing now to justify her name — "the Beautiful" — beside her site, upon the slope of a high hill, from which, in a glance, one can sweep the plain of Esdralon, and far away to Mount Tabor. But in the days of the Lord she was glowing with life, and by her faith was made worthy of receiving the good news, and beholding His wondrous works.

4 Matt. viii. 11.

At that time, the most glorious period of His ministry, the Master walked always attended by an eager array of faithful souls. In this manner He was making the ascent of the steep pathway which still leads up to Naïm, when, from out the gates of the city, there came a funeral procession; it was advancing directly in the path of Jesus, moving toward a tomb which had been made without the walls. There is no sadder sight than a burial train in the Orient; certain of the kindred bear the body, resting on a litter and swathed in perfumes and linen bands; at their head march the flute-players, who draw shrill plaintive notes from their pipes; the mourners send up a chorus of cries and wails, now beating their breasts, now tossing their hands to heaven, or tearing their dishevelled hair. And on this day their demonstration of woe must have been more wild and clamorous than ever, for they were seeking to give utterance to sorrow such as no tears can wash away. The Gospel with one word makes us feel how great was that grief: "he was his mother's only son, and she was a widow." [5] This weeping woman followed the body with a large company of the townsfolk.

Jesus could not look upon this piteous sight without being moved.

"Do not weep," He said to her; and forthwith, coming closer, He touched the bier.

The bearers understood His gesture, and stood still. The throng waited in suspense for what was about to happen; the flute-players and the wailing women were hushed and still; through this expectant silence they heard the voice of the Saviour,

"Young man, I say unto you, Arise!"

Instantly the dead sat up and began to speak. And Jesus restored him to his mother.

In this deed, who could help recognising the Prince of Life, handling at His sovereign pleasure the keys of the tomb? Elias bringing back to life the son of the widow of Sarepta, Eliseus restoring her child to the weeping Sunamite woman,[6] were evidently in every one's mind. But what a difference between Jesus, breaking the bonds of death by a word, and these prophets, who must needs throw themselves upon the corpse again and again, while they revived it with their breath. Here, instead of the prolonged and laborious efforts of a restricted power, there is the simple authority of the mighty Master! "They all were seized, with fear, and glorified God, as they said 'A great Prophet has been raised from amongst us, and God has visited His people!'" [7]

As for the child thus called back to life, and this widowed mother, assuredly it was not fear that moved them, but indeed a living faith which well nigh overwhelmed their hearts; for it was not Jesus' custom to cure the body without renewing the soul; nor can we believe that He would have awaked the dead youth from his funeral couch, that so He might restore in him the life of the senses, without, at one and the same time, inspiring the breath of immortality within his soul.

5 Luke vii. 12. 6 3 Kings xvii, 21; 4 Kings iv. 35. 7 Luke vii. 16.

III. The Message Sent by John the Baptist

Luke vii. 18–35; Matt. xi. 2–19

For more than six months now John the Baptist had been held as a captive by Herod, but from his frontier prison he still followed the course of Him for Whom he had made ready the road; and this he could do the more easily since his disciples were permitted to visit him, and could thus keep him informed of all the doings of the Christ. So, just at this juncture, he selected two from their number, and despatched them to the Saviour with this message:

"Are you He who should come, or are we to await some other?" [8]

What is the meaning of these words? Amidst the weariness and dejection of his confinement, did John feel his courage sinking? Did he begin to lose faith in the Christ? For us to harbour such a supposition would be to misjudge his character entirely. The Precursor's only design was to direct his disciples' minds by this means straight to the only teacher Who could fully instruct them in the way of life. The Saviour, who at once fathomed John's motive, made answer by letting them witness certain deeds in which His almighty powers were manifested most strikingly. "In that same hour He healed all those who came to Him, curing them of all their diseases and wounds, and of evil spirits; and to a blind man He restored his sight." [9]

Then turning to these envoys, He said "Go, and report to John that which you have both heard and witnessed — the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and to the poor the good news is announced."

Isaias, whose words Jesus borrows here, had foretold that such marvels would mark the coming of the Messiah.[10] He indeed had not spoken of any resurrection of the dead, but the Lord could not be silent concerning that which all Naïm was now publishing abroad, and therefore He alludes also to that sovereign might wherewith He holds the power of death at His will, adding yet another sign of which the Prophet had spoken: "the Gospel delivered unto the poor." [11]

In making this humble duty the culminating note in an enumeration of His most striking miracles, Jesus designed to set the true character of His mission in highest relief; because He had come, not so much to do glorious deeds, as to teach and to comfort all such as the world despises. And yet this marvellous blending of grandeur and meekness shocked the disciples of the Baptist.

The Lord, seeing them draw away from Him, uttered that solemn warning before their withdrawal:

"Blessed is he who is not scandalised in Me!" [12]

In their astonishment at this unceremonious departure, it would appear that the people conceived an unfavourable idea of these messengers, and were even

8 Luke vii. 19.
9 Luke vii. 21, 22.
10 Is. xxxv. 5, 6.
11 Is. lxi. 1; xxix. 19.
12 Luke vii. 23.

fain to suspect the fidelity of him who had sent them, for at once Jesus spoke out in his defence.

He reminded the Jews of those reeds which they had seen waving in the wind along the banks of the streams where John was baptising, and with these he contrasted the strong, unshaken faith of the Precursor, taking the thin and tremulous stalks as the symbol of inconstancy. Then, as His gaze fell upon certain men among them who were clothed in splendid garments, He compared the lazy luxury of gay courtiers with the austerity of the Prophet, saying: [13]

"What went you into the desert for to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

"What, then, went you out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?

"Nay, those who have rich robes and live in luxury do dwell in kings' houses.

"What, then, went you out for to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a Prophet.

"This is He of whom it is written: Behold I send Mine angel before Thy face,[14] to prepare Thy ways before Thee."

Was it not enough to have exalted the holiness of His forerunner so strikingly? Yet Jesus went on to say that under the ancient Law "No one among those born of women has ever risen who is greater than John."

Still, such is the superiority of the Church over the Synagogue, that Jesus adds: "And, notwithstanding, the least of all in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist"; whereby He would teach us that the lowest place by His side is to be preferred before the highest rank among the disciples of Moses.

It is this new reign of the Christ on earth "that all the Prophets had foretold, until John," and for which John himself "the new Elias," had made ready all things with such lofty zeal. His toils and trouble had not been in vain, for at this very hour all Judea was flocking to Jesus. "Already men were taking this His kingdom by storm, and in dense throngs were hastening to the assault." [15]

This declaration surprised the listeners, and was quite differently received. "The people and the publicans, baptised by John, acknowledged the justice and the wisdom of these divine counsels; but the Pharisees and the doctors of the law, who had disdained the baptism of the Precursor, now gave token of their contempt for the designs of God in their regard." [16] Whereupon Jesus addressed to them these reproachful words: [17]

"To what shall I compare the men of this generation? To what, indeed, can they be likened?" He added:

"They are like children seated in the marketplace, who cry to their companions, 'We have played for you on the flute, we have sung and you have not danced. We have chanted sorrowful hymns, and you have not wept; you have not even beat your breasts.'

"John has come among you neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He is possessed by the devil'; the Son of Man comes eating and drink-

13 Luke vii. 24–28.
14 Matt. xi. 10; Mal. iii. 1.
15 Matt. xi. 12.
16 Luke vii. 29–30.
17 Luke vii. 31, 32.

ing, and you say, 'This is a fellow who loves good cheer and wine, a friend of publicans and sinners.' " [18]

These words of the Master must have made the Pharisees and the scribes wince and writhe under the justice of the mortifying rebuke; for it was in the presence of all the people that He thus charged them with cherishing childish caprices, and of insisting pettishly that everything must bend to suit their humours — at one time complaining of John because, in their hours of pleasure and happiness, his life seemed too stern and austere; and then again, displeased with Jesus, Whose condescension and charity was a scandal in their eyes.

After this severe censure, the Lord proclaimed that although such was the state of this unbelieving generation, yet a time would come, and it was even now upon them, when "Wisdom would find her children, who would both defend and justify her."

He might indeed have pointed out such sons of the Eternal Wisdom, as they stood there in the presence of His enemies. They were the apostles, those lowly and humble men who surrounded Him, and who were yet to become the triumphant apologists of the new reign.

IV. The Sinful Woman at the Banquet Given by Simon

Luke vii. 36–50

On that same day at Naïm the divine gifts of grace were again bestowed upon mankind. While still excited by the raising of the dead youth and by the coming of John's messengers, this little city was to be the scene of one of the most touching incidents in the whole Gospel.

A Pharisee, named Simon, invited the Saviour to a banquet. Curiosity, and the pleasure of entertaining an extraordinary personage — perhaps, too, a secret sense of the majestic character of this Prophet — had induced him to tender this courtesy to Jesus. However, from pride, or from fear of his sect, he affected an air of contemptuous coldness. The usual polite ceremonials were omitted: there was no one to bathe the feet of the stranger [19] nor did any one kiss this guest upon the cheek,[20] nor offer Him perfumes for His hair.[21]

Jesus made no complaint at meeting with so cold a greeting in the house of one who had bidden Him to a formal feast. He entered the banquet hall and took His place at table. In the primitive times the Hebrews used to partake of their repasts, after the manner common among the Orientals of today, seated upon mats with their legs crossed; [22] but ever since the Captivity, they had dropped this custom in order to follow the prevalent fashion among the Greeks and Romans — slipping off their sandals at the threshold, they reclined upon couches, which were ranged about the board, and helped themselves to the dainties, while leaning on the left arm, the body lying with the feet extended to the outer circle.[23]

18 Luke vii. 33, 34.
19 Gen. xviii. 4; Jud. xix. 21.
20 Gen. xxxiii. 4; Exod. xviii. 7.
21 Psalm xxii. 5; cxl. v.; Matt. vi. 17.
22 Gen. xxvii. 19; 1 Kings xvi. 11, xx. 5, 18.
23 Esther i. 6, vii. 8.

When the great banquet hall was thrown open to all comers (as was now the case) it was customary for a crowd of onlookers to surround the feasters with perfect freedom. In this interested circle of spectators there stood a woman known throughout the whole town for her disorderly life. Upon hearing a rumour that the Christ was coming to this quarter of the city, she had hurried thither, clad in her usual rich garments, and clasping a vase of perfumes in her hand. She had pressed forward until she reached the Lord, and there she remained listening to Him in silence.

Very soon, indeed, the words of the Son of Mary found their way to her sin-stained soul; she threw herself weeping at the feet of the Master, humbly kissing them, drying them with her hair, and then, breaking the alabaster vase, she covered them with the fragrant incense.

Simon looked across the table with haughty disgust at this woman who had prostrated herself before Jesus. Neither the woeful shame nor the great wretchedness of a heart torn by repentance could move him to pity; he could see in this sinful woman nothing but a disgraced and odious creature, whose least touch would leave an ugly stain. His only surprise was that Jesus did not repulse her, as he or any other Pharisee would have done, in scorn and horror.

"If this man were really a Prophet," he mused, "he would know what sort of a woman this is who is touching him; he would know that she is a sinner." These words were not uttered aloud; but the Pharisee, if only by his silence and his contemptuous manner, let his disdain be plainly seen by all.

Jesus answered his thoughts.

"Simon," he said, "I have somewhat to say to you."

"Well, Master, say on!" replied the host.

"A creditor had two debtors; one owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. As they had not wherewithal to pay him, he remitted each one's debt. Which of the two now loves him most?"

Simon replied, without seeing what the Lord desired to prove from this, "Undoubtedly it would be he to whom he remitted the greater amount."

"You have judged rightly," answered Jesus; and then He turned His eyes full upon the sinner before Him. Huddled at His feet, she was shedding bitter, burning tears — tears which Saint Augustine has called the heart's blood. But because she was humble, and was therefore more enlightened than Simon, at the very mention of debt she knew that He was alluding to her. The Master pointed to this penitent figure, continuing still to address the astonished Pharisee.

"Simon, do you see this woman?

"I entered your dwelling; you gave Me no water for My feet, while she indeed has washed My feet with her tears, and has wiped them with her hair.

"You gave Me no kiss; while she indeed, ever since I entered here, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

"You have not anointed My head with oil, while she indeed has bathed My feet with ointments.

"And so, for this reason, I say to you, many sins shall be remitted unto her,

because she has loved much. But he to whom less is remitted loves the less."

The heart of the divine Master overflowed in this forgiveness which he now granted to one who was looked upon as the vilest object in all humanity, the very symbol of lost and depraved womankind. Not like paganism, which would have devoted her to a life of shame beyond the slightest hope of escape, Jesus cast upon her a look of such deep and pure tenderness that the Pharisees themselves dared not wrong Him by an evil thought. He raised her from the earth, and though He did not lay upon her brow that flower of innocence which once blighted never blooms again, He crowned her with a glory far more austere — the halo of repentance, and the great love of a pardoned soul.

And this divine fire blazed so brightly and so strong within this poor sinner's heart that it was purified at once of every ugly stain; "so much of sinfulness was forgiven her, because she had loved so much." And therefore Jesus had only to make manifest the miracle which grace had worked within her by saying to the sobbing woman,

"Your sins are remitted unto you."

Language like this, which had once roused the members of the Sanhedrin to a fury of indignation, here, among the Pharisees of Naïm, only excited mingled emotions of fear and awe.

"Who is this man," they said among themselves, "who even remits sins?"

But as for Jesus, all intent upon comforting the penitent, His only thought was to complete her conversion by making her know His infinite compassion, and so reviving her courage.

"Your faith hath saved you," He said; and then He added, "Go in peace!"

Forthwith, in the peace of the Lord, the pardoned sinner went away, never again to seek happiness in carnal pleasures, destined rather to amaze the world by the unflinching rigour of her expiation.

This woman, whose name Saint Luke does not mention, is none other than Mary Magdalene. Although there is nothing in Scripture distinctly to settle this fact, there are very venerable traditions of the Church which assert it; and Jewish writers add their testimony in confirmation. According to all these authorities the pardoned sinner of Naïm, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha, are one and the same person.

Of her sinful past we have no knowledge beyond a few legends in the Talmud, which speak of the beauty of Mary, the fame of her lovely hair, her wealth, and her intrigues. Her husband was a doctor of the Law, Pappus, son of Juda, whose jealousy was so great that he was wont to keep her closely imprisoned whenever he left their home. The highspirited Jewess soon broke away from this hateful restraint, joined fortunes with a gay officer of Magdala, and accompanied him to that town, where she led a life of such brilliant but unbridled indulgence that she has always kept the name of "the Magdalene."

And doubtless it was there that Jesus saw her, and so awakened in her stained and blighted heart the first seeds of a passionate regret for her lost soul. The few words at the banquet hall in Naïm were all that was needed to bring her weeping to the Saviour's feet; and ever after that day the Fathers (whose opin-

ion we are following now) delight in discovering tokens of her presence, as she follows the footsteps of the Master. She is among the Galilean ladies who went with Him, and waited upon their Lord. At Bethany she is seated at His feet, in deep speechless contemplation; then too, close by the tomb of Lazarus, and afterwards at the feast given by Simon the leper, finally upon Calvary, and at the Holy Sepulchre — everywhere whither she could tread in the pathway of Him Who had saved her.

These are the broad lines in the Magdalene's portrait, as she is depicted by tradition, which has thus filled out the shadowy sketch left us by the Gospel. Modern critics remark very truly that there is nothing in the sacred text to necessitate such a construction of the events; but surely they make a twofold mistake when they disregard tradition, which supplies facts omitted by Scripture, while without any sufficient proofs of their own, they contend that these three woman were of different dispositions, whose like could never be combined in one person. Such writers feel sure that the noble ladies of Galilee, among whom Saint Luke mentions the Magdalene, would never have associated with an infamous character; and that Mary, the contemplative of Bethany, has nothing allied to that impetuous ardour which Saint John attributes to the Magdalene upon Mount Calvary. These difficulties will not be stumbling-blocks to those who know what changes repentance can work in the soul. Conversion does, in truth, bestow a tide of nobility which no companions of Jesus ever fail to recognise; it turns the thirst for pleasures into such passionate longing for heavenly delight that the most illustrious penitents have buried themselves in a life of contemplation. And therefore we feel no more surprise at finding the brilliant courtesan sitting silent and subdued at the Master's feet, than when we see her still clinging to her dying Lord, or disputing with the tomb for the body of the Incarnate God. And so we are still constant to ancient beliefs when we prefer to think of the three Marys of the Gospel as the one Magdalene, ever venerated throughout the Church.

CHAPTER V

THE PARABLES

Luke viii. 1–21; Mark iii. 20–35, iv. 1–34; Matt. xii. 22–37, 46–50, xiii. 1–52

The public life of Jesus might be divided into two periods: one would be that in which the Jews did not directly interfere with His ministry; while during the latter epoch they actively attacked Him. Up to this time the Master's glory had known no diminution of its growing splendour in the eyes of the people; although Judea rejected Him at the command of the Sanhedrin, He found a warm welcome awaiting Him in Galilee, and each succeeding day saw the throngs about Him increase in number and enthusiasm. For a long time the efforts of the Sanhedrin's emissaries, who strove to stir up the populace against Him, were altogether fruitless; we have noticed at the banquet given by Simon

how the power and popularity of Jesus then overawed the Pharisees themselves. But now the hour had come for a complete change in the aspect of events; and hereafter the authority of the Lord begins to wane slowly and surely, until at last His enemies are again masters of the situation.

This reversal of affairs became most apparent during a second mission which the Saviour began in Galilee. It is Saint Luke [1] who tells us of these new journeyings, when Jesus travelled again through towns and hamlets spreading the good tidings of salvation; but he does not relate any particular occurrences. He simply notes the fact that the twelve apostles were with Him, and also certain Galilean women, of whom the greater number, if not all, "had been delivered by Him either from evil spirits or from other maladies. These were Mary, called the Magdalene, Joanna [2] the wife of Chuza, Herod's Steward, Suzanna, and many others who aided Him with such goods as they had."

These saintly companions of the Christ were evidently of distinguished character, both on account of their rank and their riches. Of Suzanna we know nothing more than her name — the gracefulest name of any borne by the daughters of Israel, since it recalls the white cup of the lily-flower. As for Joanna, her husband's title would lead us to believe that she had been at the court of the tetrarch before she set out to follow Jesus; yet having once devoted herself to the Lord, she never was unfaithful to her vows. We shall find her again at the sepulchre, still by the side of Mary Magdalene,[3] with whom Saint Luke associates her here.

Among all the followers of the Christ, this last-named figure is known and loved the best. We have seen how tradition regards her as the penitent sinner, who came to the feast given by Simon. This opinion would seem to be confirmed by Saint Luke himself, for he speaks of seven devils being driven out of the Magdalene; and seven may very reasonably be considered as a symbolic number, chosen to denote the depth of degradation from which the Saviour rescued this sin-soiled creature.

The holy Virgin is not named among the women who accompanied her Son; and hence we must presume that she was now living in retirement at Capharnaum. During His sojourns at different times in that city, it would appear that Jesus did not always take up His abode with her; for after this second mission-journey, we find Him in a dwelling which certainly was not shared by any of His family.

As always happened about this time, the multitude would besiege Him in such numbers that Jesus and His disciples could "not even find time to take food." [4] His kindred, hearing of this, entirely lost all self-control. "He is growing mad," they said, angrily, and thereupon took sides with the party who were abusing Him. Though indeed there were two of their number chosen by the Christ to be among the Twelve, who were now bearing their share in His toils and His glory, yet the other children of Alpheus — whether from jealousy, or from dread of being involved in some trouble with the vindictive Sanhedrin —

1 Luke viii. 1.
2 Luke viii. 2, 3.
3 Luke xxiv. 10.
4 Mark iii. 21.

shut their eyes to the light, and not satisfied with simply treating Jesus as a madman, they resolved to lay hold upon Him, and keep Him confined in their own house.

"So they started out from their home, and came hither to seize Him"; but they could not force their way into His presence, so densely packed were the townsfolk about Him! Just at this moment, too, there was additional cause for excitement; for some one had brought Him a possessed fellow, who was blind and dumb as well, and Jesus cured him, so that the man spoke and saw.[5] And all the people were amazed and said, "Is not this the Son of David?"

But there were some scribes from Jerusalem present. Though for an instant they were disconcerted by the cries of delight and wonderment, almost immediately they proceeded to whisper sly hints as usual, and began to disparage the miracle.

Why need any one be surprised, said they, that this man should cast out the devils? "He is himself possessed by Beelzebub; he therefore commands them in the name of their Prince."

Well knowing all their underhand dealings, Jesus summoned them to come nearer, and then said:[6]

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate; every city, every family, so divided shall not endure. If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall he endure?"

By this the Lord does not deny that the kingdom of Satan is a state of anarchy, but He rather insists upon the truth that it is from this single point of agreement — their hatred of God — that the divisions of hell draw the principle of their existence; were this their one note of unity to be lost (which is impossible), there would be at once an end of the realm of darkness. By the fact of His rescuing the poor victim from the infernal powers Jesus showed that He was no minister of Satan; for "No one can enter a strong man's dwelling and bear away his goods without first having bound the man of might; only then can he pillage his house."[7]

Again the Master retorts upon His enemies that their own disciples exorcised spirits in the name of Jehovah, just as He did, and hence their sons[8] would be their judges, since they could testify that hell yields obedience to other orders beside those of Beelzebub; wherefore if He, the Christ of the Lord, in His own Name and by the Spirit of God, put the fiends to flight, this indeed is proof that the Kingdom of God has really come."[9]

Then, in conclusion, Jesus called His faithful followers about Him. "Whoever is not with Me," said the Lord, "is against Me, and whoever gathereth not with Me scattereth."[10]

The scribes had also accused Jesus of having "an unclean spirit."[11] What did they mean by this term? Was it in allusion to His contempt for Pharisaic ablutions or to His tenderness toward sinners? It is quite impossible to say;

5 Matt. xii. 22, 23.
6 Matt. xii. 25, 26; Mark iii. 23.
7 Mark iii. 26, 27.
8 Matt. xii. 27. *i.e.* disciples.
9 Matt. xii. 28.
10 Matt. xii. 30.
11 Mark iii. 30.

but we know that this calumny aroused His wrath, since it called from him that dreadful warning of eternal death: [12]

"I say unto you, every sin, every blasphemy, shall be forgiven men; but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall have spoken against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but the man who has spoken against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, either in this world or in the other."

In Saint Matthew's account the reply of the Lord is reported more at length.[13] He told His slanderers that they ought at least to be consistent with themselves, and should judge the tree by its fruits. If He did actually drive out devils, why did they not acknowledge the fact? The tree is good which bears good fruit. And yet, after all, no one need be amazed at their blasphemies, for the mouth speaks from the fulness of the heart; and assuredly these creatures, this brood of vipers, could not fail to poison their speech with the venom of malice.[14]

Jesus was still speaking when a man pushed his way up to Him.

"Your mother and your brethren are without," he said; "they are seeking for you." [15]

The Lord's kindred, hopeless of making any headway against the crowds, had probably turned to Mary for aid; and the Virgin, startled by their wild tales, had left her retreat to go with them. Used to seeing Him yield to the lightest wish of Mary, they thought He could not resist an appeal coming from her. But the Christ could no longer be subject to His Mother. Hereafter He belonged to God and to the souls whom He had come to save.

"Who is My Mother and who are My brethren?" was His reply to the one who had informed Him of their arrival. And as the man was silent, Jesus' glance fell upon the disciples seated in a circle about Him; He stretched out his hands toward them.

"Behold My Mother and My brethren!" He said; "for every one who does the will of My Father Who is in Heaven is My brother, My sister, and My mother." Then rising, the Master left the house, and took the road leading to the lake, where He seated Himself by the beach.[16]

The insulting charges which we have just noticed, the efforts made by Jesus to enlighten the people, the uneasiness shown by His kinsfolk — all indicate what great changes had taken place in Capharnaum during this second mission into Galilee. The creatures of the Sanhedrin had profited by the absence of the Saviour to disquiet public opinion; and though most of the citizens were still loyal to their benefactor, the number of His enemies had so far increased that Jesus thought best to forego any further teaching in the simple and direct style which He had hitherto used. However much He may have differed with the scribes, He would, notwithstanding, submit to the limitations of their forms, and hence He determined to present His doctrine hereafter in parables, as was their custom. But while these masters of Israel only employed allegory in

12 Matt. xii. 31, 32; Mark iii. 28–30.
13 Matt. xii. 25–37.
14 Matt. xii. 33, 34.
15 Matt. xii. 46.
16 Matt. xiii. 1.

order to hide from the public the treasures of wisdom which they wished to confine to their disciples, the design of Jesus in using these veiled figures of speech was to gain the time which was necessary for the completion of His divine instructions; for He had yet to disclose the chiefest portion of His work — the establishing of His Church, her constitution, her hierarchy — an everlasting object of undying distrust and hatred to the great ones of earth.

Such a sudden change in His manner must naturally have caused some surprise; we shall see, however, that it was not at all displeasing to their tone of mind, nor did it repel them. For, in fact, the Oriental genius which is so different from ours, loves the mysterious, and takes no less delight in piecing together stray hints of meaning than we in firmly grasping the thought in its fulness. Hence it is that we have so many allegories and proverbs in the Old Testament; such too are the enigmas in the stories of Samson, of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.[17] Even today, if an Arab chance to hear some fable or apologue, he will spend whole hours in turning it over in his mind — like a child, or for that matter like every creature in whom the imagination rules the other faculties, he finds most pleasure in fanciful reveries, whose dreamy and indefinite forms he much prefers to the cold precision of our ideas. This fondness for mystic and figurative language, common to the Eastern mind, was an invaluable advantage for Jesus, because during the last year of His ministry it allowed of His giving the Jews just such glimpses of His meaning as were desirable for them, while it also permitted him to display His thought even more clearly before the eyes of His apostles and intimate disciples. These were the circumstances which prompted the Master to take up with this new form of preaching.

Jesus was not left long alone on the lakeside. Out of Capharnaum there came a great throng who crowded all the open space around Him, and stood about the beach in little knots, waiting such time as He might choose to speak.[18] There was a boat drawn up on the sand, and in this the Saviour found a seat from which He could be seen and heard. Over the heads of the people who covered all the strand His eyes could rest upon smooth fields sloping to the water's edge, beaten paths winding through rich meadows, while here and there a huge rock or clump of cactuslike thistles would give a sterner aspect to the pleasant harvest lands.

"Listen!" said Jesus,[19] stretching out His hands toward those familiar shores of Genesareth. "The sower went out to sow, and while he was sowing some grains fell into the roadway, and the birds of the sky lighted and consumed them; some other fell upon stony ground, where there was not much earth, and it sprung up immediately, because it had no depth of soil; but when the sun was up it was scorched, and as it had no roots it withered away; still others fell among thistles, and the thistles grew up and choked them; others, finally, fell in good earth and bore fruit, some a hundred, others sixty, and others thirty fold. He who has ears to hear let him hear!"

There He stopped, leaving His listeners to fathom the meaning hidden be-

17 Jud. xiv. 14; 3 Kings x. 1. 18 Matt. xiii. 2. 19 Matt. xiii. 3–9.

neath the parable. There was nothing to help them to an understanding of it; it remained a riddle not only to the Jews who were strangers to His doctrine, but even to the Twelve as well. The latter pressed about Him, and upon their asking why He spoke in this way, Jesus at once explained His conduct. If He concealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God under the form of an allegory, it was only that His enemies might "behold without perceiving, might hear without understanding," and thus, aided by this obscurity, He might (as we have said before) gain the necessary time for the development of His doctrine, which was to make out of these lowly disciples a Holy Church, the household of the most High God. The same truths were delivered to every hearer of His parables, but they were not fully revealed to any hearts which were not docile enough to beg more light of the Master Himself.[20] As for the mass of the Jews, the Oracle uttered long since by Isaias [21] was now fulfilled in them — "You shall hear with your ears, and you shall not understand; you shall behold with your eyes, and you shall not see. For the heart of this people is waxed gross; they have grown dull of hearing, they have shut their eyes, in such wise that they may no longer either see or hear or understand in their hearts; neither can they be converted nor be healed."

"But as for you," continued Jesus,[22] "blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. In very truth, I tell you, many Prophets and just men have desired to see what you are seeing and have not seen it, and to hearken to what you are hearing and have not heard it. Therefore listen to the parable of the Sower." But the minds of the apostles were not yet sufficiently clear sighted to grasp the meaning of this allegory; and for the moment Jesus was amazed at their blindness.

"Do you not understand this parable? How, then, will you be able to understand all the rest?" [23] However, He took pity upon their weakness, and expounded His own words.

The Church is a vast field,[24] through which Jesus walks scattering the grain from an unstinting hand; for the gifts of God are without measure. The seed falls everywhere in an equally generous shower — upon hearts as cold and hardened as those worn, beaten pathways, which offer it no resting-place or nourishment; upon light and superficial souls, wherein the strength of the seed, spending itself in a sudden show of growth, sends down no deep roots, and so withers beneath the first wind of temptation; upon the creatures of worldliness, who no sooner receive the gift of grace than they proceed to stifle it "beneath a weight of earthly cares and the deceitfulness of riches." But those true followers of Him are "the good ground — they who hearken to the Word, who receive it, and bring forth fruit bearing thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold." Such was the first rough draft of the Church drawn by the hand of the Master architect — a field wherein the heavenly seed is sown with exceeding plentifulness, and yet it will bear no fruit if so be that man's evil passions place an obstacle in its way.

20 Matt. xiii. 10–15.
21 Is. vi. 9.
22 Matt. xiii. 16–18.
23 Mark iv. 13.
24 Matt. xiii. 18–23; Mark iv. 13–20; Luke viii. 11–15.

Jesus dwelt more strongly still upon this last point by showing what perfect freedom of action He would bestow upon His earthly heritage, the Church. He likened it to a land which, being once oversown, "produces its fruit of itself —first the blade, then the ear, then the grain enclosed in the ear. And when it has borne its full crop, immediately they put sickle to it, because it is now the time of harvest." [25] What matters it whether the workman sleeps or watches, will not the harvest still come round? The grain takes root of itself, and grows up while he is dreaming; when once the soil is planted, there is no need of him until the time of reaping is come. In like manner the Saviour has dealt with the Kingdom of Heaven in our hearts. He came to sow, but He need never more return unto the end of time — until the harvesting is come.

Strong, sharp, and clear though these first outlines were, they did not sufficiently prefigure the future development of the Church. And so Jesus cast about for new similitudes.

"Unto what shall We compare the Kingdom of Heaven," He said, "and under what imagery may We describe it?"

In order to depict the persecutions which were in store for it He gave the parable of the cockle: [26]

"The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man who has sowed good grain in his field. Now while his people were sleeping his enemy comes and sows cockle through the midst of the wheat, and goes his way. The blade having sprouted and borne its fruit, the cockle also began to appear.

"And the servants of the father of the family came to him, saying, 'My lord, did you not sow good grain in your field? How comes it that there is cockle also?'

" 'It is mine enemy who has done this,' he said to them.

" 'Will you have us go and weed it out?' the servants replied.

" 'No,' he answered, 'for fear lest in gathering up the cockle you might uproot the wheat at the same time. Let them grow up together until the harvest, and in the time of harvesting I will say to the reapers, First tear up the cockle and bind it in bundles to cast into the fire; but gather the wheat into my barns.' "

Over against this picture of the Church's sufferings Jesus set forth the scene of its day of triumph in even more striking contrast. He showed how humble its beginnings, how slow its growth, but at the same time how mighty is the seed of life within it; and so He called it a mustard seed [27] — the tiniest of all seeds, which becomes a tree [28] in which the birds of heaven find a resting place; or it is the leaven which a woman mixes in three measures of meal, and which ferments the whole lump.

"All these things," adds Saint Matthew,[29] "He told to the people in parables, and He no longer spoke to them save in parables. Thus was fulfilled what had been said by the Prophet [30] — 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will lay bare things hidden from the foundation of the world.' "

Nevertheless the Divine Master was careful, amid all this "great number of

25 Mark iv. 26–29.
26 Matt. xiii. 24–30.
27 Matt. xiii. 31, 32.
28 Matt. xiii. 33.
29 Matt. xiii. 34, 35.
30 Ps. lxxvii. 2.

similitudes," to say nothing "which could not be comprehended" by docile hearts, and "in private He explained everything to His disciples." [31]

To them, indeed, was committed the great trust of treasuring up the truths which were denied to incredulous Jews; not that they were always to hoard this wealth in secrecy, but that they might bring them forth at a fitting hour to be the light of the Church — to be as a torch, which is not put beneath a couch, but is set within its holder that it may light all those who enter the house; "for there is nothing hidden" in the Master's doctrine "which must not be revealed, nothing done in the shadow which shall not be brought to the light." [32] This is why Jesus so earnestly beseeches His apostles to listen to His words.

"Pay heed to what you are hearing. Whoever has ears to hear let him hear!"

And again this is the reason of His solemn warning that this great gift of wisdom is not bestowed upon them alone, but that it is to be for all; hence He threatened to take it back from such as failed to guard it faithfully — "for it shall be given to him who hath," to him who preserves the words of the Master "but from him who hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away." [33]

Toward evening Jesus dismissed the throngs, and returned to His dwelling. Thither the disciples accompanied Him, and begged Him to enlighten them as to the parable of the cockle. Thereupon interpreting the allegory word by word, He showed plainly how the devil is the enemy who sows the cockle; yet at the end of the world the angels shall gather together all the scandals, together with the evildoers, from out the Church, casting them into the furnace of fire; while the just shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

To these parables Saint Matthew adds three similes which the Saviour uttered about the same time; and with these He completed the figurative description of what His Church was to become. For some 'tis a treasure buried in a field which the toiling labourer turns up with the ploughshare; "having found it, the fellow hides it, and in his joy goes out and sells all he has that he may buy the field." For others it is the pearl of great price which falls into the hands of a merchant who is seeking rare gems. For all of us it is a net which drags the very depths of the sea, letting nothing escape its meshes, bearing mankind from out the fierce waves of the world up to the peaceful shores of eternity. "As fishers seated on the strand collect together the good fish and cast away the bad, even so shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come and shall separate the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [34]

"Have you understood all these things?" added the Divine Master.

"Yes, Lord," the apostles replied; for now indeed their dazzled eyes were beginning to have glimpses of the truth, despite the surpassing splendour of His speech. Little by little they were still to descry new and lovelier verities, as the divine light grew in glory, until the time should come for all to be made partakers in the heavenly day. This was to be their commission; for, unlike those

31 Mark iv. 33, 34.
32 Mark iv. 21, 22.
33 Mark iv. 23–25.
34 Matt. xiii. 44–51.

doctors of the law who communicated their doctrine only to a handful of disciples, the apostles of the glad tidings were to spread the good news over all the earth. Just as a bountiful father will plunge his hand deep down in his coffers, bringing to light the hoardings of long ago as well as of today that he may lavish them upon the children of his household, even so the true scribe, who has knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven, must needs find in the Old Testament as well as in the New treasures of wisdom which shall become in his hands the noble heritage of all mankind.[35]

CHAPTER VI

THE MIRACLES DONE IN GERGESA AND CAPHARNAUM

I. The Possessed Creatures of Gergesa

Luke viii. 22–39; Mark iv. 35–41; v. 1–20; Matt. viii. 18, 23–34

The crowds which Jesus had dismissed after the discourse by the lakeside had now gathered about His abode once more. The Saviour, seeing that any needful repose was not to be hoped for inside the city walls, resolved that same evening to seek the lonely highlands of Perea. "Let us pass over to the other side," He said to His disciples.[1] And they, after sending away the citizens, went aboard a boat; with them was the Lord, who made no preparation whatever for the voyage; for Saint Mark says "they took Him into the bark just as He was." Several other craft sailed along in company with them, each one, amid the rustling night-winds and under the starlit sky, making quiet headway toward the opposite bank.

Jesus, seating Himself in the stern, rested His head upon the pilot's pillow; very soon He was sleeping, wearied with the toils of the day. But hardly had His eyes closed in slumber when the whole outlook overhead and round about them changed. It is with surprising suddenness that the storms burst over the sea of Galilee; from the icy peaks of Hermon the tempests precipitate themselves upon the lake, and in an instant whip its waters into wild and seething waves. Caught in one of these furious cloudbursts, the little vessels were scattered far and wide, while that of the Master was left alone, with the waters beating into it on every side.

And now the fierce floods threatened to engulf them at every moment, yet all the time Jesus slumbered on, while the apostles dared not awaken Him. But when they felt the boat beginning to settle beneath their feet fear dispelled every other thought; they threw themselves about Him, calling upon Him with desperate eagerness,

"Master! Master! save us! We perish!"

The wakening of Jesus was as tranquil to all seeming as His repose had been; and His first care was to calm their hearts rather than the angry waters.

35 Matt. xiii. 58. 1 Mark iv. 35–38.

"Why do you fear?" He said, "O men of little faith!" Only after this did He arise and rebuke the winds; [2] then speaking to the sea as if it had been a furious beast,

"Be quiet," He said to it; "curb thy rage."

And immediately the winds ceased, and there came a great calm.

At sight of the unclouded plains of heaven, and the lake once again silent and placid, it was borne in upon the apostles' minds how Jesus might well complain of their little faith. No matter what extreme of peril they might encounter, it were too trifling to notice in His presence; while He is with us we have nothing to fear. Their wondering awe was shared by the sailors who were with Him.[3]

"What manner of man is this?" they said one to another. "He commands the winds and the waves, and they obey Him."

The cry of these men of Galilee has been repeated many times since then; for the miracle performed upon the waters of Genesareth is but a type of those marvellous mercies which God has never ceased to operate by means of His Church. She likewise is sailing over blustering seas; often in the awful vortex of the whirlwind it will seem as though the Master were sleeping in forgetfulness of His own; but from age to age, at the very moment when all seems lost, the Christ awakes and with one word saves the bark. Tossed and battered though she be, so long as Jesus rests upon the pilot's bench she is upholden by a promise which cannot fail of fulfilment — His promise to bring us all together to the further shores of eternity.

Jesus did not find the quiet and repose which He had come to seek in the country of Perea. He had scarcely set foot upon the land of Gergesa when His glance encountered a mournful object. From one of the hills which rise above the lake a possessed creature had descried the landing of the little ship, and, emerging from the caves hollowed out of the cliff, he rushed down toward where the Lord stood.[4]

In ancient times there was no place of refuge where poor human beings could be kept when subject to such horrid afflictions as this; driven out of the towns and away from all houses, they must seek shelter in some ruined hovel or in the caverns which were used as graves. The horror overshadowing such an abode in which no Jew could enter without being contaminated, would naturally but increase the fury of the demoniacs.

This possessed man of Gergesa was so terrible of aspect that no one dared so much as to cross his path. It was now a long time since he had torn to pieces what few shreds of clothing still hung about him. And so he roamed night and day among the lonely rock tombs, stark and naked, uttering wild shrieks and tearing his flesh with sharp stones. They had tried in vain to fetter his limbs; he would rend his shackles with their iron chains; and after this no number of men could get the mastery over him. This was the frenzied spectre which confronted the Lord almost as soon as His foot touched the land.

According to Saint Matthew's report of the scene,[5] this possessed being was

2 Matt. viii. 26.
3 Matt. viii. 27.
4 Mark v. 2–5.
5 Matt. viii. 28.

not alone; another such wretched mortal came running up to Jesus with him. Frantic and violent though they were, yet (as all the others before them had been), these two were quelled by some divine charm in Him, and cowering in the dust before the Christ, they shrieked wildly: [6]

"What is there between Thee and us, Jesus, Son of the Most High? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

For Jesus had said to one of the demoniacs, "Foul spirit, depart from out this man!" And as Satan was loath to obey, the Saviour added, "What is thy name?"

The fiend answered by the mouth of the possessed man, "I am called Legion, because we are many."

Then shuddering and writhing before the Lord, this host of demons besought Him not to dismiss them forever from the countryside, but to allow them some place of refuge.

Now there was a great herd of swine feeding far away upon the mountainside; and the devils begged and cried, saying:

"If Thou wilt drive us hence, let us enter into yonder herd of swine."

"Go!" He said to them.

And the unclean spirits, rushing forth, seized upon the swine, who were carried headlong into the lake, and were stifled with the sea waters to the number of nearly two thousand.

At sight of their herds borne in unmanageable fury to destruction, the men having charge of them at once conceived that those mad outcasts were the cause of this new misfortune; so, fearing any encounter with such ghoulish wretches they took to flight, and spread the news as they passed along by quiet farmhouses and through the busy streets of the little city. The townsfolk sallied out at once to see what had occurred; and what must have been their surprise, on hurrying up to where Jesus stood, to perceive at His feet the much dreaded demoniac, now quietly seated, clothed, sane of mind, and whole — without a scream and without a single mark of recent struggle!

"And when those who had seen the thing related to them all that had happened to the possessed and to the herds," [7] so sudden a transformation overwhelmed them with alarm; they never thought either of denying or explaining the fact; they were simply seized with such terror that they began to beseech Jesus to leave their shores.

How can we account for this overpowering fear, the like of which was never produced by any of the Saviour's miracles in Judea — unless perhaps for the reason that this eastern shore of the lake was a very different territory, with a population far more pagan than Jewish in thought and feeling? The ten cities which gave the name of the Decapolis to these parts were Greek, both by their origin and in their manners. Gadara (which was the native place of the demoniac, according to very many manuscripts) could boast of some famous poets, among them Meleager — a singer of light love songs — and the Epicurean Philodemus, whose renown had reached Rome itself.

6 Mark v. 6–9. 7 Mark v. 15–17.

Keen in its enjoyment of earthly pleasures, this land had no desire to hear of the Kingdom of Heaven. And so, bowing to the wishes of the agitated citizens, Jesus reembarked at once; but He did not quit their country without taking care that the good news should be published among them.

As the man who had been healed presently supplicated to be taken along with them, the Saviour, not consenting to this step, bade him however,

"Return to your home, to your brethren, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had pity on you." [8]

The man obeyed, and thus became the first apostle of the Decapolis. "He announced everywhere the works of the Christ, and all men wondered."

II. The Banquet Given by Levi — The Woman With the Issue of Blood — The Daughter of Jaïrus

Matt. ix. 10–26; Luke v. 29–39, viii. 40–56; Mark ii. 15–22, v. 21–43

It was in the morning that Jesus delivered the two demoniacs of Gergesa, and by pushing out to sea without delay He could reach the fertile land of Genesareth again that same day. A long time before they hove to and dropped anchor in the little bay eager crowds had spied the vessel which had borne Him away, and hastening down along the banks, they waited to greet Him.[9]

But none welcomed Him more gladly than Levi. Evidently this apostle had remained behind in Capharnaum, and having in the interval called together a number of His friends — publicans and sinners, like himself [10] — he begged the Lord to partake of a great feast, which he immediately prepared for this assemblage. Jesus showed no hesitation about accepting the invitation, and in good time sat down to the banquet, surrounded by His disciples.

That the Lord was present at this feast soon began to be noised throughout the town. The scribes and Pharisees were the first to make their way into the great hall, thrown open wide to all comers. There they saw, enacted under their very eyes, this sad scandal, the rumour of which had so shocked them.

Verily! ay, true enough! there sat a Master of Israel, at the same table with publicans, and familiarly talking with such low company!

They were too wary now to grumble and mutter in the Saviour's hearing; but feeling that they might act more freely with the apostles, they gave vent to their distrust and horror in their ear.

"How comes it," they said, "that you and that master of yours eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"

Censure such as his, coming from men they were accustomed to look up to with reverence, could not fail to disturb these simple minds, little versed in controversy.

Jesus, knowing every movement of their souls, discerned their trouble, and Himself replied to the formalists, "that He was not come to call the just, but sinners. For men in good health have no need of a physician, but only the

8 Mark v. 20. 9 Luke viii. 40. 10 Luke v. 29.

sick." [11] Then, borrowing an expression common among their rabbis, He added:

"Go, ye, and learn [12] the meaning of those words: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice!'" [13] — that is, charity rather than mere stickling for observances.

Such precepts as this uttered by the Prophet Osee conferred upon the Law its only true dignity, by permeating it with the real spirit of Christianity before the time. But the Pharisees of Capharnaum had not so construed it; and now they refused to comprehend more than that Jesus undertook to defend His friends, and so for their part, they would refrain hereafter from all disputes with Him!

Some of John's disciples,[14] attracted thither by the hurrying throngs, had also entered the great hall. At sight of Jesus seated there, taking His part in the good things of the feast, mindful too of how the Baptist "would neither eat nor drink," [15] and even now was languishing in the dungeons of Macheronte — these sad memories quite broke down all their hopes. So then, the Christ had already forgotten His Precursor! Far from spending His time in fasting and tears, like these mourners over the downfall of their great Prophet, He was actually enjoying rich banquets, and diverting himself in the company of sinners!

Such a spectacle embittered their minds the more against Him, and made their disappointment over their own master's fate all the harder to bear. Finding that the Pharisees were ready to make common cause against Him, they joined them in reproaching the Lord anew.

"Why," they began, "should we and the Pharisees multiply our fasts, while you and yours eat and drink?"

Jesus forgave their presumption, because their zeal made it excusable; but He recalled to the minds of John's disciples how their master had compared Him to the bridegroom amid the marriage festivities, and continuing the figure, He said, "Would you have the sons of the spouse fasting and weeping while the spouse is with them?" It is befitting for us to fast in seasons of mourning only; now John had foretold that the coming of the Kingdom of God would be like a wedding festival, wherein the Christ should celebrate His espousals with humanity; and therefore, on this day of gladness, to demand that the apostles, the friends of the bridegroom, should abandon themselves to grief, would be to discredit the testimony of John himself.

"But a time will come," He added, "when the spouse shall be taken from them, and they shall fast in those days."

For the first time Jesus allowed the multitude to have some inkling of the violent death which awaited Him; but He did not dwell at any length upon this dark foreboding; indeed, He rather made haste to restore happiness and peace among Levi's guests, who had been disturbed by these ill-timed questionings.

Hereupon changing the tone of their talk, and looking round Him upon the

11 Luke v. 31, 32.
12 Matt. ix. 13.
13 Osee v. 6.
14 Matt. ix. 14.
15 Luke vii. 33

gay furnishings which decked the board, the joyous company in their bright-coloured festal robes, the tankards from which flowed sparkling wines, He began to speak in a parable, which had now come to be His usual manner of teaching.

Under this figure He propounded a truth which would be most apt to shock the Jewish mind; for He wished to have them know that in His Kingdom the ceremonies of the Mosaic worship were to be abolished — the bloody sacrifices, the symbolical ceremonies, circumcision, and everything else which in the Law was but a shadow of future things, would now fade away under the clear light of the Gospel. The Lord knew, were He to announce abruptly that the ancient Covenant had already passed away, He would arouse all Judea against Him; hence He must needs prepare men's minds, as usual, with gentle condescension.

"No one," he began,[16] "puts a piece of unworn cloth into an old garment, otherwise the new," when damp and shrunken, "gathers up the old, and the rent is made the worse. And no more does any one put new wine into old bottles; otherwise the bottles break, the wine flows away, and the bottle themselves are lost. Rather you put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

Mysterious and little understood though they were, these words could not fail to excite some surprise in the minds of His audience; perhaps they even caused renewed murmurs of disapproval. Jesus fully realised how strong the attachment to time-honoured observances can be and so He added:

"He who is wont to drink old wines does not at first relish the new, but finds the old better." [17]

As He was speaking in this way, one of the great men of Capharnaum entered the happy circle.[18] It was Jaïrus, chief of the synagogue — one of those notable men of the city who had very lately sought out Jesus to implore His aid on behalf of the Roman centurion; but this time he was to come to entreat help for himself. He fell down before the feet of the Saviour, pouring forth his prayer; and in every word of it one can note how uncontrollable and distracting was his grief.

"Lord, my little child, my only daughter is dying — she is dead — but, O come! lay your hands upon her and she shall live."

Jesus rose up at once, and followed Jaïrus. The apostles accompanied Him; behind them surged an excited throng of publicans, Pharisees, those disciples of John, and the people of the town, all eager to see what was about to happen.[19]

Now, amid this motley mass of humanity, there was a sick woman who had been subject to a loss of blood for some twelve years. Such a malady was a dreadful humiliation for any daughter of Israel; because it was looked upon as a scourge that was only laid on women of wicked character, and hence those afflicted with it were avoided and despised. The poor sufferer had paid out all her means in fees to the physicians,[20] but still in vain. She had undergone,

16 Matt. ix. 16, 17.
17 Luke v. 39.
18 Matt. ix. 18.
19 Mark v. 24.
20 Mark v. 25, 26.

without any benefit, all that peculiar treatment as to which the Talmud gives us some curious details, yet the disease grew greater every day.

She had now given up all other hope save in Jesus; but she was still held back by her timidity and shame, both because she had nothing at all to offer Him, and because her sickness was thought to be such a terrible disgrace; at last she resolved to get the gifts of grace by stealth, like a thief.

"If I can just touch His robe," she said to herself, "I shall be healed."

Urged on by this intense and lively faith, she glided through the multitude, pushed her way right up to the Master, and furtively seized the tassel hanging from His mantle in her thin and wasted fingers.

Scarcely had she touched it, when the issue of blood was stopped; her trust had been rewarded. With beating heart and half choked with fear, she fell back amid the crowd.

But though no one had noticed her act, Jesus knew of it Himself.[21] Feeling at once the power had gone out from Him, he halted and turned toward the people.

"Who has touched My garment?" He said.

As each one began to plead innocence, Peter and those round Him replied:

"Master, the people crowd about and harass you, and can you ask, 'Who has touched me?' "

"I have felt that power was gone out from Me," Jesus answered, "some one has touched Me." [22]

And as His eyes fell upon the throng He fixed one of those grave and piercing glances which fathom the depths of the heart upon her whom He had healed. The woman, seeing herself discovered, began trembling, then tottered to Him and fell at His feet, declaring before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how on the instant she had been cured. The Lord had merely looked for this simple acknowledgment.

"My child, be of good courage," He said to her; "go in peace, your faith has saved you.

"While He was still speaking comforting words to her, some members of the household of Jaïrus came hurrying toward them.

"Do not trouble the Master any longer," they said, "your daughter is dead." [23]

The unfortunate father had uttered no complaint at seeing Jesus make so long a wait by the roadside. Great and importunate as was his grief, it could not make him grudge this sufferer the happiness of being healed; for the nobleman's charity equalled his faith. The Master now turned back to him, and seeing him bowed in speechless sorrow, He spoke to him very gently.

"Do not fear, only believe; she shall be saved." And still followed by the throngs, He proceeded once more on the way.

At the house Jesus found the mourners already gathering, upon the first tidings of the child's death. The delicate body ready to be wrapped in its winding sheet and linen bands, was lying on the cold ground; round about it the

21 Mark v. 30. 22 Luke viii. 45. 23 Luke viii. 49.

women were moaning and wailing, while the shrill keening of the flutes made their cries the more dismal.

"Weep not!" Jesus said to them; "the child is not dead, she sleeps." [24]

The mourners, hearing this speech, thought that He was mocking them, and would have continued their wail, but Jesus forbade them. He made them pass without the darkened chamber, and allowed only the mother and the father of the child, together with His three most intimate apostles, Peter, James, and John,[25] to remain in the room.

In their presence He took the hand of the young girl, and called to her — "Talitha, Koumi!" [26] "My child, arise!"

At once the little maid rose and started to run, in high glee, for she was only twelve years of age. The parents were beside themselves with joy, and the Lord had to remind them of such things as were necessary for the child, telling them to give her something to eat.

In working this new marvel of resurrection Jesus had yielded to His boundless love; but may He not have feared that so wonderful a sign of his Christhood would arouse all the enthusiasm of the people, and reawaken Herod's jealousy? He had not confined Himself, therefore, to merely commanding them to keep silence concerning the matter, but had taken every precaution to conceal the deed beforehand. His first words had been, "The child is not dead, she sleeps"; and although these words were meant to signify that for Him it was as easy to recall her soul to life as it would be to awaken her from slumber, yet this sense of the words would be sure to escape the minds of the common people. The wondrous deed being accomplished, He probably remained in the house until the people outside, ignorant of what was going on within doors, gradually dropped away.

Thus Jesus avoided the first outburst of excitement; but the secret could not be kept for long. The sight of the little girl, brought back from death to life, the great gratitude of her parents, the wonder and awe of the apostles — all these soon betrayed the fact, "and the fame of the miracle was noised abroad through the whole country-side." [27]

24 Mark v. 38; Matt. ix. 23.
25 Luke viii. 51.
26 Mark v. 41.
27 Matt. ix. 26.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES — DEATH OF THE PRECURSOR

I. The Mission of the Apostles

Matt. xiii. 54–58, ix. 35–38, x. 5–42; Mark vi. 1–11; Luke ix. 1–6

When Jesus left the mansion of Jaïrus it was in order to undertake a new mission through Galilee. It was the third (and it was to be the last) of those journeyings of His during which He preached in every little hamlet of that land. First of all, this time, He wended His way up to His old home in Nazareth, and on the Sabbath began to preach in the synagogue; but He met with as cold a reception as on a former occasion a year ago; the Nazarenes were as hard and dull to the words of their fellow-townsman as they were before.

"How does he come by his wisdom and his power?" they kept on saying. "Is not this the carpenter? Is not his mother called Mary, his brothers James and Joseph, Simon and Jude? And are not his sisters all here amongst us?" And they were scandalised at Him — were shocked at His presumption!

Their phlegmatic bigotry and coarseness were well understood by Jesus; nevertheless on this particular day it would seem to have surpassed even His expectations; for Saint Mark tells us,[1] He "was astonished thereat," as though He would indicate how entire and hopeless their incredulity was by the use of this striking expression, which sounds strangely enough when used in reference to God. The Lord grieved over their blindness, and, comparing the contemptuousness of the Nazarenes with the docility of their brethren in Galilee, He repeated what He had said of them once before —

"A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and in his own home, and in his own family."

This was perforce the divine wayfarer's farewell to that ungrateful city, where his boyhood and early manhood had been passed; now all He could do here was to heal some few of their sick folk by laying His hands upon them; then He departed from the mountain valley, never more to return.

"He went through the towns and villages,[2] teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every sickness and all infirmities." The dwellers in these lands touched His heart with a great pity — they lived so far from Jerusalem and in the very midst of Pagans, "lying uncared for and spent with fatigue," panting for breath "like a flock of sheep attacked," by wolves, "who have no shepherd to lead them." However, they were all ready to receive the Good News; for Jesus, speaking of them to the apostles, called them a rich and plentiful harvest, which only waits the coming of the reapers.

"The harvest is great," He said; "but there are few workmen. Therefore beseech the Master to send workmen into His harvest."

1 Mark vi. 6. 2 Matt. ix. 35–38.

The twelve apostles were to be the first to enter these fields, which had been made ripe for the coming of their Lord. Some time before Jesus had finished His own wanderings through the length and breadth of Galilee He called them about Him, "gave them strength and dominion over all devils, with the power of curing diseases, and sent them out, two by two, to preach the Kingdom of God and to restore health to the weak." [3] Before entrusting them with so lofty and august a commission He laid down the simple and severe duties of their Ministry.

For the present He wished to send them, "not to the Samaritans, nor to the Gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of Israel." [4] All the burden of their message was to be this "announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand," confirming the glad tidings by miracles performed in the name of the Christ.

"Heal the sick, raise the dead to life, cleanse the lepers, drive out devils; freely you have received, freely give."

A holy indifference to earthly cares was to be the peculiar feature of their ministry; they might not make any preparations, but must be ready at all times to set out, in whatever circumstances they might chance to be, taking neither gold nor silver in their belt, nor victuals in their wallet, having neither a change of raiment nor travelling shoes in the place of the sandals they ordinarily wore; it would even be useless for them to get themselves a staff for the journey. Having arrived in a town, their first care must be to seek out some hospitable household, which they were to accost with that ancient greeting, "Peace be to this house!" [5] This peace of theirs should precede them and abide upon the inmates, if they proved worthy of it; if otherwise, the heavenly gift would rather return and rest upon the heralds of the good news. Should they be rejected and repulsed, they were merely to shake the dust from off their shoes without the dwelling, thereby proclaiming that they were not chargeable with the judgment, more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, which should one day befall its misguided occupants.

Up to this point the Lord had been speaking to the Twelve concerning their present mission only; but now, as though He would explain the duties of the Apostolic Ministry more generally, He began by marking out its two principal characteristics.

"Be prudent as serpents, simple as doves. Mark how I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves." [6]

Just at this moment (according to a tradition of the first century) [7] Peter interrupted his Master.

"But if it happen," said he, "that the wolves devour the sheep?"

"When the lamb is dead," replied the Lord, "it no longer fears the wolf. Even so fear not those who can only kill the body and have no power over the soul. But rather fear that which can send both soul and body down to Gehenna." [8]

3 Luke ix. 1, 2; Mark vi. 7.
4 Matt. x. 5–8.
5 Matt. x. 11–15.
6 Matt. x. 16.
7 St. Clement.
8 Matt. x. 28. [Gehenna was a noisome pit outside the walls where the offal of the city was burned.]

Then the Master forewarned them that they would be dragged before the judgment-seats, flogged in the synagogues; while still in the face of the magistrates of Judea, as in the presence of the praetors of Rome, they were to bear testimony, even to the shedding of their blood for His sake; but that during all their tortures the Holy Spirit would be with them and would make answer for them.[9] Yet the Lord did not command them to go out to seek such impending perils; rather, on the contrary, He exhorted them "to fly from one town to the other," and to persevere in the faith; for in very truth "they should not complete their tale of wanderings through all the cities of Israel ere yet the Son of Man would manifest Himself on His return."

The future, then, had only gloomy things in store for the apostles; therefore, in order to strengthen and inflame their courage, Jesus reminded them of the obstacles which opposed His own mission.[10]

Like Him, they must be calm and fearless; the heavenly Father "Who numbereth even the hairs of their head, Who lets not the littlest sparrow fall from the skies upon the earth without having care thereof" — their Almighty Father would be with them, "would acknowledge those as His own children whom His Son claimed as His disciples, and would reject all such as He disowned." [11]

Then He added that He had come to cast a drawn sword upon the earth; that very soon they should see their fathers and their children in league with the world, and eager to deliver them up to death. In the midst of raging war and of unbridled passions He bade them remain steadfast, "publishing upon the housetops that which the Master had spoken in their ear," [12] preferring Jesus above all whatsoever they held most dear and glorious, "losing their life to find it again" [13] in Heaven — in a word, they were "to take up their cross and follow Him."

After this mystic allusion, by which He foretold His Crucifixion, the Lord uttered only words of loving consolation and splendid promise. He told His apostles that they should stand in His stead in the eyes of the world; [14] "that to receive them as ambassadors of God would be to receive the Christ — would indeed be to entertain God Himself and to merit the rewards laid up for the just and the prophets."

Then, with one hand pointing to the poor folk and little children, who crowded about Him now as always, He concluded with those touching words: "Whosoever shall give but a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink, as unto one of My disciples, I say to you that indeed he shall not lose his reward."

Such were the instructions with which Jesus prepared this college of the Twelve. It may be that all were not delivered on this particular occasion, and that, following his usual custom, Saint Matthew has here collected counsels which were actually uttered at various times. But whether Jesus spoke the whole discourse before this one audience, or whether the evangelist, divinely inspired, has connected maxims scattered through many lessons of the Master,

9 Matt. x. 17–23.
10 Matt. x. 24, 25.
11 Matt. x. 29–39.
12 Matt. x. 26, 27.
13 Matt. x. 37–39.
14 Matt. x. 40, 41.

none the less Saint Matthew's work stands as a finished and complete model for every apostle of the evangelical ministry; and indeed, though every priest of the Lord Christ be not bounden by the letter of these instructions, it does behove all to be quickened by their spirit. Truly every one is not bidden to press forward to the prize of the martyr's crown, yet all must follow the Master in the paths of sacrifice; the Lord God does not demand of each one of us a complete renunciation of all things, for He Himself has declared that "every workman is worthy of his meat"; [15] and yet, in proportion as zeal in the hearts of His apostles burns higher, and the holy flame waxes purer and whiter, by so much more joyously do they strip themselves of everything in the race unto their high calling which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Saint Paul converted the nations of the earth while He himself toiled at tent-making for his day's bread; [16] Saint Francis Xavier took with him nothing but a cross of wood wherewith he went forth to conquer the eastern world.

Obedient to the commands they then received, the apostles departed, going two by two.[17] Without doubt the intimate friends and the brothers would bear each other company in this sacred comradeship. Peter, of course, would associate himself with Andrew; those two whom He had called "Sons of the Thunderbolt" would forthwith start out together, with all their characteristic impetuosity; Philip would join Bartholomew, whose two lives had been heretofore so closely linked together; then would come Thomas and Matthew; while the two cousins of Jesus, James and Jude, would naturally be companions; and finally it was probably Simon's sad and unenviable fortune to have for his fellow-labourer in the harvest, Judas.

II. Death of John the Baptist

Mark vi. 14–32; Matt. xiv. 1–13; Luke ix. 7–10

Jesus, left alone in His own field, continued to preach in all the cities of the lake country, when the news suddenly reached them that John the Baptist was dead; his head had been struck off in the dungeons of Macheronte.[18]

After being for twelve months imprisoned in that "dark fortress," John still displayed the same spirit which had made him so terrible to sinners upon the Jordan's bank; neither caresses nor threats had moved his stalwart courage one whit, and though they did not heed him, his stern voice fell upon the ears of the tyrant in no less unsparing denunciations. Herod trembled as he listened, torn in the strife between remorse and passion. Too weak to rid himself of his fearless accuser by a crime, yet too deeply corrupt at heart to subject his will to duty, he made shift to compromise with his conscience by simply shielding the Baptist from the insatiable hatred of Herodias. The struggle between these two was prolonged and stubborn; for the rancour and venom in the heart of the adulterous woman embittered her the more against her victim, the longer she was thwarted and balked in her schemes of vengeance. This creature be-

15 Matt. x. 10.
16 Acts xviii. 3.
17 Mark vi. 7.
18 Josephus.

ing determined to compass the prophet's ruin, was ever on the watch for some opportune moment; it came soon enough.

After the fashion among the Roman princes, Herod and his sons always celebrated certain memorable epochs in their lives with the greatest pomp. The anniversary of his birth chanced to occur while Antipas, with his court, was at Macheronte; there he made high festival, gathering about him all the courtiers, rich officials, and nobles of Galilee. From what we know of the wealth of the Herods, their lordly extravagance, and their gorgeous pageants, we are warranted in fancying the grandeur of the ceremonial and the brilliancy of their sports, together with the bright hangings which adorned the rugged walls of that gloomy old castle, as being altogether beyond anything ever seen among those desolate hills. Yet, besides all this, Herodias had devised for the king a night of revelry, which was fitted to intoxicate him even more surely than the fumes of wine, and would thus be likely to place him completely at her mercy.

All wanton dances brought over from Italy were well known to her; she knew which of the movements in those horrid orgies would be most apt to hold him in besotted fascination. Such shameless pastimes had for some time been of common occurrence within the palace of the Tetrarch; but on this evening it was Herodias' will that her own daughter should be one of the damsels taking part in those unmaidenly carousals. This young princess, descendant of Herod the Great, sprung from the seed of the Machabees, and later on destined to be the wife and the mother of kings, on this night appeared in all her brilliant state, the central figure in a circle of dissolute companions. By her dancing, she so transported the prince with delight that, as the wild applause of the revellers died away, he swore that he would give her whatever she might desire of him, were it even the half of his kingdom.

Salome sped quickly to her mother.

"What shall I demand of him?" she said.

The royal harlot had a ready response for this her moment of triumph:

"The head of John Baptist."

Not even a shudder stirred the drapery of the young dancer; tripping back to the king she repeated her mother's words, without a touch of pity or a thrill of shame.

"I will that you give me at once and on this very trencher, the head of John the Baptist." And as she spoke she caught up one of the great dishes with which the table was loaded.

On this request Herod was struck sad at heart; he was just awakening from the madness of passion, only to see the snare into which he had been led by his blind, brutish nature. But the vanity of the Tetrarch was proportionable to his weakness; he saw the looks his high-born guests were fixing upon him, and he had neither the courage to excite their satirical remarks, nor did he dare to brave the anger of those two unscrupulous women, who now claimed their promised prey. Seeking to shield himself from any responsibility by pleading the sacredness of his oath, he gave the fatal order. The headsman (according to the usage of Oriental courts) was standing behind the person of royalty, ready for the deed; a few moments later John Baptist was no more.

That very obscurity in which the Prophet had desired to be eclipsed [19] has in fact completely overshadowed his martyrdom. No witness has ever related how he received the iniquitous decree, or with what tokens of inward peace he faced death. The executioner returned very shortly, bearing upon that charger the reverend head of the Nazarite; he handed it to the royal dancer, who carried the bleeding trophy to her mother. If we may credit certain traditions,[20] Herodias pierced with needles the tongue which she had been powerless to check in life, and then commanded that his torn and disfigured body be thrown into the chasms around Macheronte, so to become food for the dogs and foul birds of prey. But the disciples of John were keeping watch at every point; gathering together the remains of their master, they piously buried him, and then sought out Jesus to tell the sad tale to Him.[21]

God's vengeance fell upon the slayer of His Prophet without delay; from the moment when the head of the Baptist was shown to the conscience-stricken Tetrarch, there was never another hour of quiet repose for the tyrant. Always thereafter he would see now and again the tables spotted with blood, and the Prophet's cold brow, seeming more severe than in life, so drawn and white in death, while the thin lips appeared as if just about to open and rebuke the guilty adulterer.

Now, instead of his former habitual indolence, he lapsed at once into a wretched humour, fluctuating restlessly between horrid fright and vague suspicions. The fame and power of Jesus had moved him scarcely at all heretofore; but now he grew suddenly wroth at the tales which his courtiers brought him.

Only a few days later, a rumour reached Macheronte that the Saviour was drawing still greater concourses of people, and that every day He performed new and more wonderful prodigies. At this, Herod shuddered in great terror. "'Tis he!" he cried out. "It is John Baptist who has risen again!" [22]

It was useless for the prince's familiars to endeavour to quiet his alarm — some assuring him that Jesus must rather be Elias, once again returned to earth from his flaming chariot; others asserting that He was merely one of the prophets; while the more sceptical among them would have it that He was but a seer, like those who were common enough in the time of their forefathers. But as for Herod, whose vision was continually haunted by the grim spectre of his victim, his trembling lips kept repeating, "It is John; it is the man who baptised! He has been raised up from the dead; that is why he can work such miracles." And eager to ascertain the truth of his forebodings, he cast about for some means to see Jesus for himself.[23]

The Lord would have incurred the greatest danger from any such encounter with the furious and terrified Tetrarch. Unquestionably He would have been constrained to suspend His ministry at once, at least in Galilee, while He would have been forced to forego His Paschal pilgrimage for that year, and the time for the caravans to start was already drawing near. The return of the apostles finally decided Him to pass over into the realm of Philip without delay. Whether

19 John iii. 30.
20 S. Jerome; Nicephorus.
21 Mark vi. 29; Matt. xiv. 12.
22 Luke ix. 7.
23 Luke ix. 9.

their mission had been finished just at this time, or whether that also was interrupted by the death of the Forerunner, at any rate, the Twelve had now returned to their Master, and at one and the same time. To Him they rendered their report "of what they had done and taught"; "how they had cast out devils, anointed very many sick folk with oil, and cured their illnesses." [24] Tired and spent with their long journeyings and saddened by the fate of John, they came to seek rest and comfort by the side of Jesus; but the Lord could offer them no quiet relief, because of the crowds "which came and went, and left Him not even time to eat."

And therefore He said to His way-worn little band:

"Let us go apart by ourselves into some desert place, and there you may rest yourselves for a little time." [25]

The sea of Tiberias was not far off from where they stood; at the Master's bidding they sought out a boat for the passage, and speedily shook out sail, heading for the north.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BREAD OF LIFE

I. The Multiplication of the Loaves

Luke ix. 10–17; Mark vi. 30–56; Matt. xiv. 13–36; John vi. 1–21

In the northwestern region of the lake, and near the spot where the Jordan empties its water into the little sea, there stood a flourishing town. Its name of Bethsaida, which it bore in common with that other village in the neighbourhood of Capharnaum, would indicate that at no very remote time it had been but a fisherman's station; but in the time of Jesus, Philip, Tetrarch of Iturea, had transformed this little settlement into a city, and had called it Julias, in honour of the daughter of Augustus. Round about this young and vigorous town stretched great tracts of moorland, bordered on the east by hills which were as bleak and lonely then as they are today; it was toward this wilderness that the Lord fixed the course of their little ship.[1] Here his disciples counted upon finding that repose of which they stood greatly in need; but their hopes were destined to be disappointed.

Despite the privacy and quiet with which Jesus had screened their sudden departure, some witnesses had marked the sail being hoisted and the boat drawing away from land.[2] But as they met with only contrary winds, little progress could be made; hence their arrival was anticipated, and Jesus, coming to land close to the river-mouth, found there a multitude as great in number as that which they had tried to escape. Besides the inhabitants of the neighbouring

24 Mark vi. 13, 3.
25 Mark vi. 31.

1 Luke ix. 10; John vi. 1.

2 Mark vi. 34; Matt. xiv. 13; Luke ix. 11.

villages, there were many pilgrims among them, who had come from distant lands; for it was now close upon the Paschal Season,[3] and caravans were being collected all along the seaboard.

Yet the Saviour would not swerve from His first design; setting out inland, He led the way to a lonely and retired hill, and there seated Himself with the weary little circle of apostles. But hardly had he done so, when on raising His eyes, He saw the multitude coming toward Him — a fatigued and huddled throng, "like sheep without a shepherd." [4] Something in their forlorn and uncared-for condition so touched the heart of Jesus that at once He forgot His own weariness and gave all His thought to them. "He spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and healed all their sick." [5]

The sun was sinking over the distant hills of Zabulon,[6] yet still the Saviour continued His blessed office of charity; then in a few moments (for twilight lingers for such a little while in the East) night was come upon them, surprising this foot-sore and fainting flock far away out here in the wilderness. At last the disciples began to show signs of uneasiness, and gathering about the Master, finally spoke out their fears.

"This place is a desert," they said, "and the hour is late; send away the people, so that they may go into the nearest farm-houses and villages, where they can find lodging and victuals."

"They have no need to go," replied the Lord; "do you yourselves give them to eat."

And as the apostles stood staring and speechless at such an astounding proposition, Jesus turned to Philip [7] and said —

"Where shall We buy bread to feed all this multitude?" (He spoke in this way to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do.)

"Two hundred denarii," [8] Philip answered, "would not buy enough bread for each one to have even a small portion."

"How many loaves of bread have you?" was all Jesus said; [9] "go and see."

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, returned immediately saying, "there is a young lad here who has five loaves of barley-bread and two fishes; but what is that among such a crowd as this!"

Jesus bade them bring the loaves and the fishes.

"Make the men sit down," He said to the apostles.

They obeyed His behest; and the people sat down upon the long grass, in companies of hundreds, and fifties. It was still spring-time. The fierce heats of the sun had not yet robbed the Galilean hills of their soft garments of green; and thus the groups of friends and companions ranged about in order, made a happy and charming scene, which, together with the glowing tints of their oriental robes, left such a vivid picture upon the memory of Peter that in after years he described it to Mark the Evangelist as being like gorgeous beds of flowers [10] extending along the rich green sward.

And Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes into His holy and venerable

3 John vi. 4.
4 Mark vi. 34.
5 Luke ix. 11.
6 Luke ix. 12, 13.
7 John vi. 5, 6.
8 [Over $25 of our money.]
9 Mark vi. 38.
10 Mark vi. 40.

hands, and with His eyes lifted up toward Heaven, He gave thanks to God, blessing the bread, brake, gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the people; with the fishes He did likewise. Whereupon, in the hands of the Lord, the broken bread and the portions of fish multiplied without ceasing; [11] and so He continued to give unto these His ministers until all were satisfied. Then, to mark more clearly still how plentiful are the gifts of Heaven, yet at the same time to guard against any squandering of His bounties, He said to his disciples:

"Gather up what fragments are left, for fear they should be lost."

Each one of the apostles, taking up his wicker pack, threaded his way through the orderly bands; on their return, the twelve baskets were filled with the leavings.

In the eyes of the evangelists this miracle assumed the greatest importance; for each one gives us an account of it, and Saint John, by proceeding at once (as though it were the only natural sequel) to record His promise of "the Bread of Life," shows us what a lofty meaning Jesus attached to this prodigy of love. The sight of the pilgrims wending their way to Jerusalem, the nearness of the holy festival at which He might no longer take part without great danger to himself, the thought of the Last Supper, whereat, just one year hence, He was to substitute for the paschal lamb an immortal food — all thoughts like these impelled Jesus to declare at once and for ever the great Mystery of His love.

The primitive Church was so assured of the truth of this interpretation that during five centuries, when she would figure forth the Eucharist, she represented not the Last Supper, but the Multiplication of the Loaves; and this scene she set over against the very table of the Lord, together with the fish, which is the symbol of the Christ, and the baskets overflowing with fragments gathered up by the apostles.

And thus we know that by working this prodigy Jesus sought to prepare their minds for the reception of higher truths; but far from responding to the lofty designs of the Lord, the emotion now stirring the excited throngs had sprung from the belief that their dreams of earthly happiness were at least to be realised.

"This is He!" they exclaimed to each other.

"This is surely the Prophet who is to come into the world!" [12]

And so without doubt they had understood the promise, thinking that Jesus would stretch forth that sceptre which Balaam had foreseen,[13] whereupon at once their oppressors would crouch before Him. He would be like to Elias descending from His chariot of fire; another Jeremy, who should restore the mosaic worship in all its olden splendour; and unto the Temple He would be the Ark which, since the days of Babylon and the Captivity had been hidden from the eyes of the faithful.

The Saviour knew these passionate aspirations, as He knew well that they were already planning to bear Him along with them, and by force of arms proclaim Him King.[14] He saw, too, that the hearts of His disciples were beginning to burn high as they listened to these visions of glory, while they were

11 Mark vi. 41.
12 John vi. 14.
13 Num. xxiv. 17.
14 John vi. 15.

gradually being filled with these ardent hopes of their fellow-countrymen. It was indeed time to forestall an uprising which would have drawn down upon Him and upon His Mission the wrathful vengeance of Herod, the Sanhedrin, and Rome.

Immediately He called the apostles, bidding them follow Him to the beach. There He commanded them to embark forthwith, and to head for Bethsaïda in the vicinity of Capharnaum; then as they were loath to obey, the Master obliged them to set sail at once, leaving Him there upon the shore.[15]

When they had disappeared over the darkening waters, Jesus dismissed the crowds attending Him, and, profiting by the shades of night, He sought the lonely heights of the mountain,[16] unseen by any man. He went thither to fortify His Soul against the onslaught of other and sadder trials, for on the morrow Capharnaum would reject Him, even as Nazareth had done; nor was it to be long before all Galilee would follow their example; and so on, during all that last year of His ministry, until His eyes could discern before Him only one unbroken succession of base desertions and thankless perils.

In the meantime, with the midnight, a tempest had descended upon the valley of the Jordan; beaten upon by wild winds, the waters rose in their might and broke over the little ship of the apostles.[17] The whole night long they struggled against the storm, rowing with all their strength, in the hope of making the port of Capharnaum; but the gale, wrenching the bark from its track, kept them tossed and buffeted amid the great seas.

At the fourth watch of the night,[18] they had gone barely halfway on their course, and were still fighting against the wrack of the storm, when of a sudden they saw some one afar off, walking over the waves; it seemed to them as though He were making toward them, as if to cross before their bows. Believing that this which they saw was a phantom, they were filled with dismay, and in utter terror cried out aloud. But at once the calm voice which they knew so well came over the raging elements, quieting all their alarms —

"It is I, fear not!"

And, indeed, it was Jesus, who had taken pity upon their troublous toils. They felt sure of His divine help, and eagerly made ready to welcome Him; but Peter impetuous and fiery of soul as ever, cried out —

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the waters!"

"Come," replied the Lord.

Straightway the apostle sprung from the vessel's side, hastening to meet the Master. And at first he trod the waves with unfaltering footsteps; but when he felt the fury of the whirlwind about him, terror clutched at his heart-strings, and he began to sink.

"Lord!" he cried, "save me!"

Jesus, reaching out His hand, upheld and sustained him.

"Ah, man of little faith!" He said to him, "why hast thou doubted?"

15 Mark vi. 45, 46.
16 John vi. 15.
17 Matt. xiv. 24; John vi. 18.
18 John vi. 19. Like the Romans, the Jews at this time divided the night into four watches, from six in the evening to six in the morning: the fourth watch extended from three to six o'clock.

Meanwhile the others besought the Saviour with all manner of prayers to come to them, certain that the Divine Pilot would bring them safely into the haven. Nor was their faith disappointed. Scarcely had Jesus entered with Peter into their ship when the winds fell; and presently they found that their vessel had reached the harbour toward which they had been so long fighting their way.

The effect which this sudden stilling of the tempest had upon the disciples' minds was altogether different from the enthusiasm caused by the multiplying of the loaves. "They had not understood the latter miracle at all," says Saint Mark, mournfully,[19] "because their heart was blinded." Too dull and too sordid of soul to conceive of any spiritual Kingdom as yet, their fancy filled with flattering dreams of high fortune awaiting them, they had met the brave hopes and resolutions of the excited people with daring encouragements; for they hoped that the Master would be moved by such zealous courage, and with a word establish His throne upon earth. Accordingly, when they saw that He meant to refuse the sceptre now offered Him, they were so sore at heart and so dissatisfied that they quite forgot the almighty attributes of their Lord, and dared to resist His commands. It required a night of anguish and terror, like this through which they had passed, to bring them to a knowledge of their fault. But this trial tore the veil from their eyes; as they beheld Jesus bidding the roaring floods be still, and holding the powers of nature beneath His feet, they recognised "Him Who spreadeth out the heavens and walketh upon the waves of the sea." [20] Throwing themselves on their faces before Him, they worshipped and adored Him, saying:

"Truly, ay, truly, Thou art the Son of God!" [21]

No sooner had Jesus descended from the vessel than He was known and greeted; and instantly the rumour flew from lip to lip, until the land of Genesareth was made aware that He had returned. The multitude which was just dispersing now collected together once more, and brought with them other ill and maimed folks, beseeching Him to let them only touch the hem of His robe.[22] This prayer recalled the faith of the poor creature with the issue of blood, and Jesus healed all who approached the Divine Presence with such simple hearts of faith; afterwards He reentered Capharnaum, welcomed on every hand with cries of delight and gratitude — the last which it was given to Him to hear in this "His City" by adoption.

II. The Promise of the Eucharist

John vi. 22–71

The crowds they had left behind them on the other side of the lake, in the neighbourhood of Bethsaïda, had watched the ship of the apostles making off from the shore, and knew that Jesus had not embarked with them. Somehow in the night they had lost all trace of the Master, but at dawn seeing that no

19 Mark vi. 52.
20 Job ix. 8.
21 Matt. xiv. 33.
22 Matt. xiv. 34–36.

other ship had quitted its moorings they made sure of finding Him speedily. So all the morning they searched over fields and plain, but of course in vain; then they concluded that He had proceeded by land, intending to rejoin His companions by some unfrequented road. In the meantime several other craft hailing from Tiberias, but now flying before the storm, had put into this harbour; and many of the Jews availed themselves of this opportunity to reach Capharnaum.

On their arrival they found the Lord seated in the synagogue, instructing the people.

"Master!" they exclaimed, "when did you come here?"

Jesus looking deep down into those hearts that yearned so after earthly goods, now plainly told them the nature of their longings.

"Of a truth, yea, of a truth," He said to them,[23] "you are seeking Me because of the loaves with which you were fed. Do no toil for the food which perishes, but for that which endures in the life of eternity. This the Son of Man will give you, for on Him the heavenly Father hath set His seal!"

By these last words Jesus quickened and ennobled the hopes of the Jews, by lifting them from thoughts of earthly refreshment, setting before them that immaterial nourishment which is of the spirit. Hence He declared that it was not His design to establish a temporal kingdom, but rather to reign in the souls of men; it was to this end that God had imprinted a divine character upon His Holy One, the Christ, confirming His mission by miracles without number. And therefore this food of which He spoke was a certain spiritual food, which He alone would impart. This the Jews comprehended, though they were too stubborn, and settled in their own notions of their law to believe that God Himself could confer upon it any more perfect dignity.

"What shall we do," they said in their amazement, "in order to labour for the works of God?" [24]

"This is the work of God," replied Jesus, "to believe in Him whom He hath sent."

Nor does this faith, to which the Master here reduces all His precepts imply merely a belief on our part in the word of the Christ; it means that we must likewise give ourselves to Him without a shadow of reserve. It is faith, quickened by charity, fastening mightily upon the object of its love and diffusing through all humankind the gracious gifts of God.

It is evident that the Saviour repeated this explanation more than once, and that in even clearer and simpler terms than would appear from this short summary of Saint John; for we know that His listeners understood well enough that He demanded of them a devotion and self-sacrifice which was unlimited and well-nigh unparalleled. He would have them follow Him as blindly as of old, Israel followed Moses, leaving Egypt and its pleasures behind them.

"Our fathers," they began to say, "ate Manna in the desert, as it is written: (He hath given them bread from Heaven to eat.) But what miracle will you work so that we may see and believe in you? What will you do?"

23 John vi. 26, 27. 24 John vi. 28–31.

Had not all the traditions asserted that the second Redeemer would renew the wondrous deeds of the first? And besides, how could anybody compare those loaves of barley-bread, multiplied so simply under their very eyes, with that nourishment which long ago fell about the plains of Sinaï? If He would prove Himself in deed and in truth the Messiah, it were needful that He too — the Christ of the Lord — should bring down from the skies that Manna which David had called "the bread of heaven and the food of angels." [25]

These objections Jesus accepted very graciously; only He explained to His listeners that it was not Moses, but God Himself who had rained down Manna in the desert; telling them, too, how those perishable meats were called in a figure the bread of Heaven. While yet again today God, by the hands of His Christ, tendered them the very bread come down from Heaven; and so divinely did He speak of this celestial food, and of the life which it would diffuse throughout the world that the Jews cried out in their delight —

"Lord, give us this bread always!"

"It is I," continued Jesus; "I am the very Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

Certainly this answer was not so mystical but that the Jews might have easily grasped its inner meaning; indeed they had often read in their sacred Books [26] that "man lives not alone by bread, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God"; often they had heard the voice of wisdom calling to their souls in words like these: "Come, eat the bread which I will give you; drink the wine which I have prepared for you." [27] Thus to eat and drink the truth, to sate one's heart with the taste and fulness of holy words, and by study to assimilate and digest the teaching of the Master — this was a figure as familiar to their way of thinking as it is foreign to ours.

So they at once comprehended that by calling Himself the bread of life Jesus offered them His heavenly doctrine as the garner wherein is stored every good gift that they could desire; and this promise once more made their hearts beat high with brave hopes. But what was still to follow did not accord with their preconceived ideas. Proceeding at once to develop His thought,[28] Jesus declared that hitherto they had only beheld Him with their eyes, without understanding who He was. Because He had descended from Heaven, He can have no other will except that of His Father, and therefore He receives only such as come to Him from God. Now the will of the Father is that all those who believe in the Divinity of His Son should partake of that Bread of Life (which is the Christ Himself), and thereby have part in the life everlasting.

At this new revelation of His Godhead the synagogue broke out into murmurs of stern disapprobation; more than all else those words, "I am the living Bread which is descended from Heaven," aroused the deepest antagonism and disgust of which they were capable.

"Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph?" the townsfolk of Capharnaum ex-

25 Ps. lxxvii. 24, 25. 27 Prov. ix. 5. 28 John vi. 36–40.
26 Deut. viii. 3.

claimed. "Have we not known his father and his mother? Then how does he dare to say that he has descended from Heaven?"

Jesus did not stop to answer these malcontents; as was His wont, He deemed it enough to reiterate what He had communicated to them already, only with a more luminous simplicity, leaving it for the indwelling truth itself to quicken and enlighten their souls. Again He told them that faith is a gift of grace; and He repeated that no one can come to Him who is not prompted by the heavenly Father — "taught of God, using the language of the prophets" — which means that they must be touched from on high, their souls drawn by a secret influence inherent in the truth of His word.

Still more clearly did He disclose the mystery of His Incarnation, showing them that God is too high, too holy an object for our earth-bound senses to encompass through human wisdom; for truly "no one can see the Father save Him alone who liveth in God"; yet this divine seer, this holy thing, Son of the Father, has become Man that He might unite Himself to mankind for love of humanity — His divinity taking upon itself a dwelling of mortal flesh in order to communicate its own life unto all men.

This was the Master's exposition of the divine economy, whereby He sought to show us the way of faith which leads us unto salvation. And in order to engrave this lesson within the hearts of those who hearkened to Him, He condescended to put forth the same great thoughts over and over again, reproducing them under such manifold phrases that it would seem He did but hesitate in His speech, as though He were striving to utter the language of paradise before this wondering throng of earth-bound mortals. This is why the evangelical text contains so many repetitions, and hence arises the difficulty which we experience in tracing the connection between the various ideas.

Nevertheless the Master had one more Mystery to unveil on that same day. When the Son of God was made man the wonder was not wrought among us that He might dwell in a human body merely for the time of His earthly pilgrimage; rather it was His will to apply the fruits of His Incarnation unto all mankind, thus being made fresh for each one of us, by nourishing us with His Blessed Body. It is, therefore, when we feast upon His flesh that Jesus takes possession of these bodies of ours; it is by the mystic union of all that He is in His humanity with all His divinity that salvation is assured into us of the faithful. Jesus only asked these people of Capharnaum that they love Him enough to entrust themselves implicitly to His guidance, and then, through the thick clouds which must ever shroud this divine mystery, they should walk forward encompassed by the presence of their guide and friend; and so, led onward by the Christ, they would surely find the life everlasting in faith — faith which reveals the gracious fact of the Eucharist as being in a marvellous manner inherent in the Incarnation itself.[29] "The bread which I will give," He added, "is My flesh for the life of the world."

At this surprising announcement that they should eat the flesh of the Christ

29 John vi. 52.

there was a louder murmur of dissent arising from all parts of the synagogue; on every hand the Jews began to dispute with each other,[30] the majority arguing, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Evidently they could only comprehend that they were bidden to take a human body and feast thereon, that they must shed human blood and drink thereof.

Yet, far from abating this literal interpretation by one whit, Jesus saw fit, on the contrary, to enforce it by a double oath:

"Amen, Amen, I say to you, If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and do not drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day."

He well knew what horror the Jews felt for any such idea of blood, and how strictly they were forbidden the use of any such food; [31] and notwithstanding, He did not hesitate to assail and overturn every most cherished belief of their lives, if by so doing, He might more surely establish the reality of His Body, which is eaten by the faithful, and His Blood which is their drink.

"My flesh is truly meat, My blood truly drink, and he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I in Him. Whosoever eateth Me shall live by Me."

And now, having so clearly set forth the meaning of the Eucharist, He spoke to them of its effects; for though an ardent faith could make eternal life certain for the soul of man, and for his body obtain a glorious resurrection, yet it is the Eucharist alone which unites Jesus with the Christian who receives Him; in one only body and one only soul commingles the lives of two under one form, and thereby in each one of us is consummated that union of the Christ with humanity, even as aforetime by the Incarnation "He dwelt amongst us."

The earnestness and persistency with which Jesus reaffirmed a doctrine so shocking to the notions of His hearers resulted in open expressions of their impatience and dislike. It was not long before the citizens of Capharnaum were joined by the pilgrims and all the rest, while even the disciples themselves finally uttered strong protests.[32] "This is a hard saying," they said; "who can hear it?"

And certainly, after the fashion in which they understood it, it would be an unbearable thought; for they imagined that they were bidden to tear the body of the Master limb from limb, and make a horrid feast of its members.

Jesus strove to drive away this unholy vision from their mind by adding that, though He was to give Himself to be their Bread of Life, yet would He none the less rise with glory into Heaven, even in such wise as He had descended to our earth, clad in this His living tabernacle of flesh; He said, too, that "His flesh," broken and dispersed among us for our food, "would avail us nothing, if we do not partake at the same time of the spirit" and the Godhead, which quickeneth the flesh and diffuses its life through our souls. As to the manner and the mode which He would take in order to communicate this gift to us,

30 John vi. 53–60.

31 Lev. vii. 27; 1 Kings xiv. 33; Judith xi. 11.

32 John vi. 61–64.

being an ordinance far beyond the ken of sensual man, He saw fit to await some future day for revealing it more fully. So for the present, it was enough to prepare their minds by repeating that "His words were spirit and life," whereby He would teach them that His faithful followers must find the spirit of holiness and the life divine in the surpassing Mystery of the Communion, wherein His flesh is really eaten, though in a manner more spiritual than material.

These explanations did not dispel all disquietude from the hearts of His disciples, and among those who rebelled against this truth Jesus must have marked one of the twelve, Judas Iskarioth; for "from the beginning He knew those who did not believe in Him, and He knew him who was to betray him." [33] The sight of these obstinate mortals still muttering against Him, so easily shocked at His Word, and already prepared to declare their outspoken disbelief, was very grievous to the heart of Jesus.

"There are some among you who do not believe," He exclaimed, "and it was for this reason I said to you, 'No one can come to Me, unless it be given him by My Father.'"

And yet this last appeal to their nobler feelings was rejected; still they would not understand this urgent warning to ask their heavenly Father for the faith which comes from Him. Humility and obedience for them were at an end. "After this many of His disciples drew away from His company, and walked no more with Him."

However, the apostles were still left Him. Turning toward the Twelve He said [34] —

"Will you too go away?"

Peter loved his Master too well to doubt His words, however incomprehensible they might seem; indignant at the very thought of deserting Him, he straightway replied for all:

"Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe, we know, that Thou art the holy of God."

Dear and comfortable as this confession was to the heart of Jesus, it could not quite console Him nor distract His thoughts from the traitor in their midst.

"Have I not chosen you Twelve?" He said, "and one of you is a devil."

"By this He meant Judas, son of Simon, the man from Kerioth, who was to deliver Him up, even while he was still one of the Twelve." It is evident from these words, as we have noted before, that Judas took some part in these murmurings of the citizens and pilgrims. Long since the struggle between greedy avarice and his heavenly vocation had been going on within him, and hence every allusion to a spiritual kingdom filled him with vexation and anger; for it all seemed to him more visionary and foolish every day. The discourse just now delivered in the synagogue of Capharnaum completed the destruction of his faith. Hereafter, though he remained in the intimate companionship of Jesus, he had already betrayed Him in his soul. By this rebuke the Saviour graciously sought to stir the soul of the thief. Finding He could only get silence in return, He wended His way sadly from out the synagogue.

33 John vi. 65-67. 34 John vi. 68-72.

BOOK FIFTH

THIRD YEAR OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Simon Peter's Testimony

And Jesus . . . asked His disciples, saying: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"

And they said: "Some, John the Baptist; others, . . . one of the Prophets."

Jesus said to them: "But Who do you say that I am?"

And Simon Peter answering said: Thou art THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD" (Saint Matthew, xvi. 13–16).

CHAPTER I

THE SOJOURN OF JESUS IN TYRE AND THE DECAPOLIS

I. The Pharisaic Ablutions

Matt. xv. 1–20; Mark vii. 1–23

Only one year lies between Jesus and death; its opening days are dark and threatening. Judea, the foremost object of His care, now treats Him as if he were its bitterest foe. "He would no longer walk there, because the Jews sought to kill him." [1] Jerusalem was closed against Him; they were celebrating the Pasch there now, yet He could not show Himself among His people. Galilee, in its turn, had withdrawn from Him, and Capharnaum had broken out into angry murmurs against Him. The Lord had no other alternative except to wander through a pagan territory, across the kingdom of Philip and into the lands lying beyond the Jordan. Meanwhile we shall see Him still pursued from town to town, from one wilderness to another, even to the day when, with His mission accomplished, of His own will He saw fit to deliver Himself into the hands of His executioners.

However, although Capharnaum had lost its first faith, it never conceived any such violent hatred for the Master it had so recently honoured and loved as that displayed toward Him by Jerusalem. Jesus still dwelt there in safety until the return of the pilgrims who had gone up to the Temple; but once the Paschal-time was over, He could see that new numbers of spies were dogging His footsteps. These were "some of the Pharisees and certain scribes who had come down from the Holy City," [2] full of the discussions to which they had been listening from their famous doctors, and thereby nerved with greater zeal than ever to maintain the perfect observance of their cherished ordinances.

The freedom which the Lord displayed in dealing with their Pharisaical pre-

1 John vii. 1. 2 Mark vii. 1.

cepts, was, as we have said, a shocking and scandalous thing to those sectaries. Now we are well aware to what excesses, in the matter of ablutions particularly, the Jews of this period, and notably the Pharisees, carried their scrupulosity. Saint Mark tells us how, before each meal, they were wont to wash their hands with the greatest care, scrubbing their clenched fists one against the other,[3] immersing their whole body in water on their return from any public places, forever cleansing their cups, water-jars, brazen pots, and the wooden parts of the couches on which their guests reclined. And these interminable pains were not mere practices which one was free to observe or not; but, being taught as the traditions of their ancient rabbis, they were as rigorously enforced as any precepts of the law. To abide in the faithful practice of all these, it behoved one to go any distance for the necessary water, and the Rabbi Akiba was praised for incurring the risk of dying of thirst in prison rather than drink without having first purified his hands. It is true the Sadducees ridiculed this slavery to trifles, and often asked the Pharisees if they would not end by sprinkling the sun with lustral water; but all their ridicule could not rob the scribes of their ascendancy; and, in the people's eyes, to violate one of their observances still continued to be regarded as a heinous crime.

The apostles, reared from childhood in reverence for the Doctors of the Law, now trembled before them; consequently, they were vastly disquieted when they saw some of these personages approaching the Christ with words of cold disapproval.[4]

"Why do not your disciples follow the traditions of the ancients? Why do they eat with unclean hands?"

Jesus would not allow these hypocrites to practise upon the simplicity of the apostles. He straightway took up the defence of His own, and withstood them, meeting reproof with reproof.[5]

"And you," He said, "why do you transgress the law of God in order to follow those traditions of yours? God has said, 'Honour thy father and thy mother.'[6] And yet you say: If a man says to his parents, I have vowed to God that which I might have bestowed upon you; the word 'Corban' once uttered, the vow is irrevocable, and you no longer permit the son to do anything for his father and mother. Thus you set the law of God at naught by your traditions.[7] Hypocrites! verily it was of you that Isaias prophesied:

> "With their lips do these people honour Me,
> But their heart is far from Me,
> In vain do they honour Me,[8]
> Teaching the doctrines and the precepts of men."

It was the first time that Jesus had so severely scourged the Pharisees, openly treating them as hypocrites and laying bare the inherent weakness of their doctrine. Hitherto He had said nothing as to their claim that they were justified in giving the same force to the teaching of their rabbis as to the commands of God; until now He had never tried to dissuade the people from believing that

3 Mark vii. 3.
4 Mark vii. 5.
5 Matt. xv. 3, 4.
6 Mark vii. 11-13.
7 Matt. xv. 7.
8 Is. xxix. 13.

these observances also came from Moses, and thus formed a second Law. But it was time for Him to tell them plainly that only upon the ruins of the Commandments could the Pharisees succeed in establishing their traditions. And this Jesus did with such overwhelming authority, swaying all minds with such convincing power, that His enemies retired in confusion.

But the astonished crowds were also for withdrawing in their turn. Jesus called them back to Him.[9]

"Listen to Me, all of you," He said, "and understand. There is nothing from without a man which, by entering into him, can defile him; but whatsoever proceeds from a man, that it is which renders a man impure. Whoso hath ears to hear, let him hear." And leaving the people there, He reentered His dwelling.

This saying of the Christ was at once reported to the scribes. It touched them to the quick, discrediting as it did their interminable ablutions, which had no power to cleanse the sin-stained soul; leaving the people to infer that even those Mosaic purifications, which thus far Jesus had treated with respect, would soon have to give place to simple counsels of an inward purity of heart. Deep was their indignation; indeed, their anger was so threatening that the frightened disciples hastened back to the Lord.[10]

"Do you know," they said to Him, "how much the Pharisees were scandalised at this saying?"

Jesus met their anxiety with imperturbable serenity, and repeated that these regulations, invented by man and reprobated by God, must disappear.

"Every plant," He said, "which My Heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up; if a blind man guide another, both of them shall fall into the same pit."

His firmness restored peace among the apostles, but their slow and uncultured minds could not manage to decipher the hidden meaning of those words which had so shocked and offended the scribes.

"Lord," said Peter, in the others' name,[11] "explain this parable to us."

Though yielding to their request, the Master replied:

"What! are you too, then, devoid of intelligence? [12] Do you not understand that there is nothing from without which, by entering into a man, can render him unclean, because it does not enter into his heart? For it is from within, and from the heart, that there arise all wicked thoughts — adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, avarice, malicious deeds, cheating, lewd thoughts, a covetous eye, blasphemy, pride, folly. These are things which defile a man; but not to eat with unwashen hands, for that cannot defile a man."

II. The Chanaanitish Woman

Matt. xv. 21–28; Mark vii. 24–30

Jesus had not succeeded in discomfiting the Pharisees without embittering their hearts with a fiercer dislike for Him. Very soon they had arrayed such

9 Mark vii. 14.
10 Matt. xv. 12–14.
11 Matt. xv. 15–20.
12 Mark vii. 18.

a formidable host of foes against the Master that He saw it would be impossible for Him to remain in Galilee, or even to return thither, except at rare intervals. Crossing over the frontiers of Zabulon and Nephthali, for the time being He sought an asylum in the pagan provinces, and stayed there during almost six months, devoting all His care and attention to the apostles, thereby finishing the instructions He had come to bestow; giving them to know more of His Church and tracing out before their eyes its divine plan.

The evangelists mention but a few of the incidents of this journey. They merely state that upon leaving Galilee, shortly after the Pasch (April), the Saviour passed from Tyre into the Decapolis, made a brief sojourn on the shores of Genesareth, went back immediately to the valley of the upper Jordan, and did not return to Capharnaum until about the Feast of the Tabernacles (the last of September).[13] During this voluntary exile, the Master for the most part sought solitude, probably changing His place of abode as soon as His presence in any region came to be remarked, for He had not been sent to enlighten the Gentiles in His own person; therefore, faithful to the terms of His mission, He endeavoured to remain unknown in these wealthy countries.

However, His coming could not continue always entirely unnoticed; for now a long while the renown of His deeds had exceeded the boundaries of Israel; long since, out of Tyre and Sidon, people had journeyed to hear His words and to beg the cure of their sick, so that all Syria was now well aware that a prophet, the Son of David, was once again conferring a heavenly splendour upon the land of Juda.[14]

Now as he was passing along the road not far from either Tyre or Sarepta, a woman who had overheard much talk concerning Him, hurried out of the house where her daughter lay struggling in the throes of a furious delirium.

"Have mercy upon me," she cried, "my Lord, Thou Son of David. My daughter is cruelly tormented by the devil."

The Gospel informs us more at length as regards the poor petitioner.[15] A Greek by language and manners, she belonged to the Phœnician provinces of Syria, and was a descendant of the race of Canaan; hence it was a disowned and reprobate blood which flowed in her veins. The Lord answered her not a word.

Without heeding this silence of the Christ, the woman set out to follow Him, never ceasing to implore His mercy. Jesus entered a dwelling in order to remain in seclusion there, but the Chanaanean begged with no less earnestness, and did but redouble her supplications when the door was shut and she was left outside in company with the apostles. Wearying of her cries and furthermore fearing lest the knots of curious spectators now collecting around her should attract attention to them, and so betray the identity which the Master desired to conceal, coming in to Him they said:

"Send her away, for she keeps calling after us." [16]

At no time had Jesus ever dismissed any one who thus besought His aid with-

13 Mark vii. 24, 31; viii. 10, 27; John vii. 1, 2.
14 Mark iii. 8; Matt. iv. 24.
15 Mark vii. 26; Matt. xv. 22.
16 Matt. xv. 23–25.

out first granting their prayer, and the apostles had no idea but that in this instance He would act as usual; yet, as it happened, He only vouchsafed the reply:

"I am not sent except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."

Yet, when they repeated His words to her, the Chanaanite was not disheartened one whit by this rebuff. She determined to renew the strife again with the Lord Himself, trying to wrest the will of Heaven and so prove herself worthy, pagan though she was, to be treated as though she were a true child of Abraham. And so she crossed the threshold of the house, made her way to where Jesus stood, and casting herself at His feet, cried out:

"Lord, help me."

The Master continued to display the same hardness; nothing seemed to move Him, neither her tears nor the sympathy of the apostles, now quite amazed at seeing Him for the first time insensible to compassion.

"Let the children be filled first," He said, "for it is not fitting to take the children's bread and throw it out to the dogs." [17]

Still the mother would not yield. She bowed beneath this bitter rebuff, which rated her as of less worth than an unclean beast; nay, she would even endeavour to bend this reproach to her own advantage, and so manage to turn His own words against the Christ.

"It is true, my Lord," she answered, "but even the little whelps eat the crumbs of the children's bread which fall beneath the table."

At this Jesus suffered Himself to be overcome; thus far He had resisted only that He might invigorate that faith which He saw burning so steadfastly within her, thereby exalting it to the point of heroism. The tender mercies of His heart, now repressed too long, suddenly overflowed in a cry of joy.

"Ah, woman, your faith is great; let it be done unto you as you will." [18]

The Chanaanite hastened back to the home where she had left her child; the demon had disappeared, and the little one was lying upon her bed.

The Gospel makes no mention of other miracles performed in these pagan lands. It only adds that Jesus "departed from the border-land of Tyre, returning by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee." [19] The road ran across one of the loveliest provinces of the Roman Empire; for Tyre, Queen of the Seas, had not as yet "become silent in the midst of the waters," [20] and every day the tides came in freighted with rich argosies of the world. Sarepta still kept alive the memory of Elias and Eliseus; Sidon had still its famous fisheries of Tyrian purple; on every hand, along the wayside, were groves of palm and orange trees, under whose dusky shadows the mysterious rites of Astarte or of Baal were celebrated. Hereabouts there was nothing that deserved the notice of Jesus; His thoughts were elsewhere; His soul, lifted above the earth, could not be touched by the beauty which fades away; His glance only sought out those unfortunate ones whom He might still venture to help and to comfort, speaking only to those care-worn hearts whose courage He so well knew how to revive;

17 Mark vii. 27.
18 Matt. xv. 28.
19 Mark vii. 31.
20 Ezekiel xxvii. 32.

and thereupon He turned aside from this land, too merrily brilliant and careless of aspect to be a fitting abode for the Man of Sorrows. Making His way through the Valley of the Leontes, He came out at the Jordan near its source, and by this route descended to the Decapolis.

III. The Second Multiplication of the Loaves

Mark vii. 31–37; viii. 1–9; Matt. xv. 29–38

The Decapolis lies to the east of the Sea of Tiberias, extending in a northerly direction toward Damascus, and to the south as far as the cataract of Jabbok. As its name implies, it formed a confederation of ten free towns, half pagan, which the Jews had not been able to subjugate after their return from the Captivity. Jesus was not a stranger nor entirely unknown here in these Greek cities, for the possessed persons of Gergesa had published the power of their Saviour on all sides, and hardly had His coming been noised abroad before they brought a deaf and dumb man to Him.[21] Those who had guided him thither besought Jesus to lay His hands upon Him. The gift of mercy was not refused them, but hoping to find in the Decapolis the same seclusion which he had enjoyed in Phœnicia, He desired to perform the cure in privacy. Therefore, He took the feeble fellow's hand in His own, led him away from the throng, and there laid His fingers lightly upon his ears to denote that they were to open, and with a little saliva touched the tongue which was soon to be loosed; then He raised His eyes Heavenward and groaned, sighing not merely for the sad condition to which sin has reduced mankind, but, for the many hearts still hardened to the truth.

"Ephphetha," He said. "Be thou opened."

"And immediately his ears were opened, the string of his tongue was loosed, and the dumb man spake distinctly."

Jesus enjoined secrecy upon the witnesses of this marvel,[22] but they only listened to the promptings of heartfelt gratitude. "The more He forbade them to speak, the more they published it abroad: 'He doeth all things well,' they said; 'He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.'" In vain did the Master retire into the wild and desolate highlands lying to the east of Genesareth Lake, wishing to avoid their eager demonstrations. From the hill-slope whereon He found a resting place soon He saw a great crowd of country-folk pushing their way up to where He sat.[23] On every hand they were bringing all manner "of dumb, and blind, and lame, and maimed, and many others, and these they put down at His feet," fully confident that they would rise up sound and well. Touched by their faith, Jesus granted the petitions of each and all, "insomuch that the people were struck with wonder when they saw the dumb speaking, the cripples made whole, the blind seeing," and in their joy these pagans of the Decapolis "loudly glorified the God of Israel."

However, the concourse was growing greater from hour to hour; in a short time four thousand men, without counting their woman and children, had all

21 Mark vii. 32–35. 22 Mark vii. 36, 37. 23 Matt. xv. 29–31.

gathered together in this far-off wilderness. For all of three days they stayed close about the Saviour, only desiring to follow Him; but such little food as they had soon disappeared, and being remote from any village, they began to suffer the weakness of hunger. Once more Jesus was minded to spread a table for His people in the midst of the wilderness, and He called the apostles.

"I have compassion on this throng," He said,[24] "because for three days now they have remained with Me, and they have nothing to eat. If I send them back thus to their homes, their strength will fail them, for some have come from far away."

The Twelve were surprised at any such plan. Unquestionably they had not forgotten the prodigy performed near Bethsaida a few months earlier, but the answer given to the Chanaanitish woman was still fresher in their memory — how that it is not fitting to cast the children's bread to dogs — and they had no notion that their Master would lavish upon these pagans any such bounties as He had been wont to bestow on the sons of Israel.[25] So they answered:

"How are we to find enough bread in this desert place to satisfy so great a multitude?"

"How many loaves have you?" asked Jesus.

"Seven," was the reply, "and a few small fishes."

Upon that He bade the throngs sit down upon the ground; took the seven loaves and the fishes; then giving thanks, He broke them, gave them to His disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. The four thousand men, the women-folk, and the children ate and were filled. This time, without waiting to be prompted by Him, the apostles gathered up all the fragments that were left, and they filled seven large hampers. Afterwards He had still to dismiss the concourse whose faith had made them intrude upon the solitude of the Master. However, from this gathering Jesus had not to encounter either that obstinacy or those ambitious cravings which His former miracle had excited among the Jews at Bethsaida. All showed their willingness to obey his behests, and readily departed.[26]

CHAPTER II

THE CONFESSION OF PETER

Matt. xv. 39; xvi. 1–28; Mark viii. 10–38; ix. 1; Luke ix. 18–27

When the crowds had all disappeared Jesus walked down the moorlands to the shore, whence a bark bore Him across to the opposite bank.[1] What design could it have been moved Him to revisit these places which from now on were destined to be so hostile to Him? Was it the desire once more to oversow the fields of Genesareth with the holy seed of His word, or did He hope to find,

24 Matt. xv. 32; Mark vii. 3.
25 Matt. xv. 33–37.
26 Mark viii. 9.
1 Matt. xv. 39.

further inland, in the hill country of Zabulon, a still profounder solitude? The latter hypothesis seems the likeliest one, after all; for the Master ordered them to land, not at Capharnaum, but upon the desolate shores of Magdala, and Saint Mark tells us that He set out immediately for Dalmanutha,[2] an obscure hamlet lying among the mountains which separate Magdala from Tiberias.

But despite the care which Jesus took to conceal His presence, He could not escape the persecution of the Pharisees and Sadducees. For a considerable time they had appeared to be indifferent to the movements of the Christ. So absorbed were they by the schemings of their political life that they bothered themselves but little as to this Galilean prophet and His "Kingdom of Heaven"; but the Jewish scribes had at last managed to arouse them from their state of indifference. Tiberias, where Herod had a royal residence, was near by, and the courtiers and high officials of this prince belonged mostly to the sect of the Sadduceans; accordingly it is some of their number whom we find here, mingling with the emissaries of the Sanhedrin. In former years the Saviour had found it sufficient to withdraw for a short space, in order to quiet the mistrust of the Tetrarch; but since that time the blood of John Baptist was upon Herod, destroying his peace; his courtiers and ministers were readily instigated against Jesus, and promptly joined the zealots of the Law in their relentless pursuit.

This time the attack of His sworn foes took a new turn. Until now the Pharisees had been content to depreciate the miracles of the Christ by attributing them to Beelzebub, persuading the people that no prodigy performed upon earth can be regarded as proof of a Divine mission, because there is none which is beyond the power of the devils. But here at Dalmanutha they loudly challenged the Saviour, defying Him "to work some sign upon high" — to cause the sun to halt, as Joshua had done, or, like Samuel, bring the thunderbolt crashing down from out the cloudless sky, or encompass Himself about like Elias in the days of old, with lightnings and flame.[3]

Jesus disdained this provocation, as once before in the desert He had spurned the demands of Satan. All power was given to Him in Heaven and upon earth — this the poor and the suffering of Judea knew well; but to be so conciliatory to His enemies and to triumph over them by a profitless display of His divine attributes — so far as this the Master could not condescend. He was content to turn His face westward, pointing to the sun, whose last rays were veiling the distant mountain peaks in a mantle of gold.

"In the evening," was his answer,[4] "you say: 'It will be fine tomorrow for the sun is red.' And at dawn: 'There will be a storm today, for the sky burns with a lowering glow.' Hypocrites! you discern what the face of the heavens portends, and yet you know not how to recognise the signs of the times in which you live!"

Indeed what more open and explicit signs could they have than the Sceptre now departed from Juda, Daniel's Week of Years fulfilled, the message of the Forerunner, the sick and feeble healed, the dead raised to life?

"What!" He exclaimed, "does this wicked and adulterous generation seek a

2 Mark viii. 10. 3 Matt. xvi. 1. 4 Matt. xvi. 2–4.

sign! There shall be given it no other sign but that of Jonas the prophet." [5] And leaving the Pharisees with this prophecy of His Resurrection, Jesus returned into their little vessel.

Once more He quitted the shores of Galilee and set sail for the northern part of the lake; and as they drew away from the land, He watched the bank fading away and vanishing in the soft shadowy haze: Capharnaum, Bethsaïda, Chorozaïn, one after another, had rejected Him — had abandoned Him to His enemies! Now as it happened, in the haste of their departure, the apostles had forgotten to renew their store of provisions, but one loaf of bread remained, and they made the discovery only when their bark was far out from land.[6] As they were grieving over their neglect, Jesus spoke to them in words which were meant to turn their minds from these material cares:

"Take good heed," He said, "and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." [7]

The disciples, thinking that the Master shared their anxiety about their daily food, inquired of each other what he would have them understand by this speech. Was He reproaching them for coming on board without stores, or did He mean to forbid them to partake of any food along with Sadducees and Pharisees? Not one of them was reminded of that unseen leaven which, fermenting in the human heart, sours and corrupts its life; although Jesus had employed a metaphor often used by the Jews to describe the effects of sin, still they understood Him not.

"Men of little faith," He exclaimed,[8] "why do you think that you are without bread? So, then, are you, too, devoid of either sense or reason? Are your hearts blinded? Have you eyes only that you may not see, and ears that you may not hear? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand men, how many baskets of fragments did you take up?"

"Twelve," they said.

"And when I broke the seven loaves for four thousand men, how many full hampers did you gather up?"

"Seven," they replied.

"Then how is it that you do not understand that it was not of bread I spoke when I told you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?" [9]

From this rebuke the apostles began to see how they had wounded the heart of the Master by so disregarding His loving care, ay, even His power. Their higher thoughts aroused once more, they finally glimpsed His hidden meaning: it was not of the leaven which is put into bread whereof He told them to beware, but of the doctrine of His enemies.

The morning of the next day they made land in the kingdom of Philip, and Jesus wandered along the Jordan until they were not far from Bethsaida-Julias, whereupon some people brought a blind man for Him to lay His hands upon him.[10] Studious as ever to refrain from manifesting any striking proofs of His power outside the land of Israel, the Lord took the poor sufferer by the

5 Mark viii. 12; Matt. xvi. 4.
6 Mark viii. 14.
7 Matt. xvi. 6.
8 Matt. xvi. 8–11; Mark viii. 17–21.
9 Matt. xvi. 11, 12.
10 Mark viii. 22.

hand and led him away from the busy town in order to perform the cure unnoticed. But He did not accomplish this prodigy (as He had done many others, which we have witnessed so often in Galilee) easily and without effort, with a word or by the mere movement of His will; for it was part of the hidden counsels of the Godhead that the effects of His supernatural power should be proportioned to the faith of those who implore His aid. Just as the unbelief of the Nazarenes had stood in the way of His working any miracle for them,[11] so here at Bethsaida-Julias the faith of the blind man was still so weak as to hinder his being cured at once, and accordingly we see Jesus gently opening the eyes of his body, little by little, in proportion as He dispelled the darkness from his soul. For this reason now He multiplied the exterior acts, as though He wished to quicken the suppliant's desire for salvation — the firm hands laid over his eyes, the spittle of the Christ moistening them like a heavenly balm.

"Do you see anything?" Jesus asked.[12]

Glowering about him, the poor man suddenly cried, "I see men walking, yet they look to me like trees!" And in his delight he turned toward the Master again.

A second time the Saviour's hands touched his eyes, and at once they saw all things clearly. Jesus imposed strict silence upon the man, bidding him:

"Return to your home, and if you should come into the town, tell this to no one."

In this instance it would seem as if the Lord were better obeyed than a little while before in the Decapolis, for we see Him shortly afterwards leaving the village accompanied by His disciples alone.[13] In this way He reached the sources of the stream and arrived at the capital, called by the Tetrarch, Cæsarea-Philippi, in honour of Tiberius Cæsar, his protector and patron. Built upon the ruins of ancient Dan, Cæsarea still preserved Pan's Grotto, which was so famous in the days of the Greek colonists that for a long time the city bore the name of Panea. But neither these relics of paganism, nor the more recent splendours of Cæsarea attracted the Lord. He did no more than pass through the outskirts of the city, and preferred to seek a resting-place at the foot of Mount Hermon — in the valleys which the water-springs of the Jordan fill with heavy coverts and the rustling of numberless brooks.

Among the rest there is one memorable fact which will ever make this forest-country illustrious. Here, while Jesus was praying in solitude, all at once, breaking off from the prayer which was His only repose here below, He called to His disciples, who had now drawn aloof from Him, and began to question them.

"Who do they say that I am, I, the Son of Man?"

Sorrowful was the answer. His apostles confessed that as yet no one in Israel had acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah. Some, like Herod, overmastered by their guilty fears had taken the Christ for a resurrected John the Baptist; [14] others believed they were listening to Elias; others called Him

11 Mark vi. 5.
12 Mark viii. 23-26.
13 Matt. xvi. 13, 14.
14 Matt. xvi. 14.

Jeremy. "It is the seer," was the popular cry, "who returns among us to repeat his lamentations." Many imagined He was some new prophet, but none had seen in Jesus that which He is unto all time. And although certain stupendous marvels had manifestly declared His Messiahship, these were no more than flashes of lightning for an instant glittering through the glooms of night; throughout the land of Juda, the Light shone amid darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

"And now for your own part," Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?" [15]

Put to them at a time when the Master was wandering afar from His native land, this question was nothing less than a decisive trial of His apostles. Simon stood the test without flinching. Instantly he took up the word, in the name of his brethren, and addressing Jesus in his straightforward fashion said:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

The faith of Peter, quick and living as of old it was, whether amid the howlings of the storm, or in the disapprobation of Capharnaum, now lifted the veil which over-hung the divinity of the Saviour, and, rising above all that which is of man, proclaimed Him Son of God, equal and consubstantial with His Father — which is to say, God Himself.

Listening to this profession from the lips of His apostle, Jesus responded.

"Blessed art thou Simon, son of Jonas, because neither flesh nor blood has revealed this unto thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And now I say to thee: Thou art Peter (a Rock), and upon this Rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against thee. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and all that thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

These words conferred the primacy upon the son of Jonas, and upon Him established that masterwork of the Christ, which is His Church, a name we find here mentioned for the first time. Simon the weak mortal of flesh and blood, was become the foundation stone, destined to brave all assaults of Hell. In making this apostle the base of His eternal Church, Jesus assured him the same stability which He gave the holy edifice, transmitting the privileges of Peter to his successors. Like him they should all be seated in the chair of infallibility and hold in their hands the keys, symbol of supreme authority. All who were to come after him, even as he, must give laws to the Church, guiding in the paths of salvation, kings and peoples, pastors and their flocks; they must judge without appeal, bind and loose upon earth and in Heaven, opening and shutting the gates of the celestial Kingdom. Such powers are divine, but they are the natural consequences of that promise made to the son of Jonas:

"Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church."

But these surpassing splendours of the Church were only as yet a fair and distant prospect; for Peter and his companions there was still in store the fierce struggle which precedes the victory, and straight before Jesus Himself there stretched a weary way of sorrows. For, with a price set upon His head, har-

[15] Matt. xvi. 16–19.

rassed and hunted down by spies and informers, hereafter He must needs keep silence as to the unconquerable Kingdom He had come to establish. So, scarcely had He uttered the divine promise to His apostles, out here alone in the forest, when He commanded them authoritatively to observe the strictest silence so far as concerned what they had just heard from Him.[16] The Confession of Peter, his primacy in the Church, his privileges and prerogatives were as a sacred confidence which must not go beyond the Apostolic College; and the reason He gave them for this was that His enemies would shortly put Him to death.

It was the first time that the Master had spoken so openly of His death; hitherto He had only made mysterious allusions to it. And indeed in this instance He did not go so far as to unveil the utter ignominy of the Cross, deeming it enough to declare "that He must go up to Jerusalem, there to suffer many things at the hands of the ancients, the pontiffs, and the scribes, and to die." [17] As yet He did not add that "He was to be delivered by these men into the hands of the Gentiles," and until the very time of the passion He forbore to tell them "that He was to be spit upon, whipped, and bound to a Cross." [18] Knowing by experience the weakness of His disciples, He was careful to shield them against despair. So then, that He might reawaken their courage, He now foretold "that after three days He would rise again."

Consoling as this promise was, it could not satisfy the sturdy ardour of Peter. The great praise bestowed upon him, and the joy he felt at having confessed, in the others' name, the divinity of His Master, had now excited all his vanity. In his eager self-sufficiency he took it upon him to withstand the Lord Himself, and to bid Him proceed no further along paths which would lead to death. Grasping His hand, he drew Him to one side and began to chide Him for His words.[19]

"Now, please God, this shall not happen to you, Lord!"

Jesus turned away from him, and looking toward the apostles He spoke in a tone so loud that those who had listened to His eulogy of Peter should likewise hear this stern rebuke:

"Get thee behind Me, Satan! Thou art a scandal unto Me, for thy wisdom is not of God but of man."

While Peter stood there, humbled and silent, Jesus recalled their minds to His approaching sacrifice, and drew from the thought a powerful lesson which the Twelve were not the only ones to hear. Meantime, many of the country-folk had collected together at a short distance from this youthful rabbi Who was as yet a stranger to them. The Saviour bade them come nearer; then, with that same tone of authority which He was wont to use in Galilee, He began to instruct them; telling them that the great duty of life is to renounce one's self, to sacrifice everything in the pursuit of truth and righteousness, forgetting the body and its cravings, the soul and its most intimate promptings.[20] Once more He repeated what He had already said,[21] that along this rough and griev-

16 Mark viii. 30.
17 Matt. xvi. 21; Mark ix. 31.
18 Matt. xx. 19; Mark x. 33.
19 Matt. xvi. 22.
20 Matt. xvi. 24–26.
21 Matt. x. 38, 39.

ous pathway they had but to follow in His footsteps, and, like Him, bear their cross by mortifying their passions. This was what the Master had called "losing one's soul in order to save it."

"Of what profit is it to a man," He exclaimed, "to gain the universe, if so doing he loses his soul? What will he give in exchange for his soul?"

This saying threw a chill shadow of foreboding over the apostles' spirits. In order to reinvigorate their faith, the Lord forthwith announced His future Advent, surrounded by angels, so to reward His tried and tested followers; [22] then before their eyes He set forth the splendour of that great way, when His Church in its triumph would supplant the earthly realm of Israel; and finally He told them of the hour, now near at hand, when three of His apostles were to be brought face to face with the divine being.

"There are those among you," He said, "who shall not taste death until they have seen the Kingdom of God." [23]

Six days later this prophecy was accomplished in the persons of Peter, James, and John, who fell down at the feet of their transfigured Master. But even in the crowds which listened to these words there stood more than one disciple who was to survive the ruin of Jerusalem, and with the eyes of the flesh would behold the new reign of the risen Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSFIGURATION

I. Jesus on Mount Tabor

Luke ix. 28–45; Mark ix. 2–32; Matt. xvii. 1–23

Since this instruction a week had elapsed, during which the Master descended the valley of the Jordan, then quietly and unheeded took the mountain track which leads across the hills lying along the eastern shore of Lake Genesareth. On the eighth day the evangelists show Him wending His way up the steep sides "of a tall mountain," [1] which they do not mention by name, yet it is none other than Tabor, if we may trust the testimony of tradition.

It was twilight when Jesus began the ascent. Three Apostles bore Him company — Simon and the two "Sons of Thunder," James and John. As they were destined to behold the Agony of the Lord it was fitting that their faith should be fortified beforehand, and their eyes illumined by the effulgence of the Godhead. They climbed the rocks wearily without any presentiment of what they were to witness, and once on the summit, seeing the Master wrapped in prayer,[2] according to his nightly custom, they stretched themselves along the ground close at hand, and here upon Mount Tabor, as again only a little later in Gethsemani, soon yielded to their need of sleep.[3]

22 Matt. xvi. 27.
23 Mark ix. 1.
1 Mark ix. 1.
2 Luke ix. 28.
3 Matt. xxvi. 40, 43.

And, lo! while praying, Jesus is transfigured: [4] a glory all divine streams through the veils of flesh, His face shines like the sun, a whiteness as of glistening snow envelopes His garments. "Never fuller upon earth made whiteness like unto this," says Saint Mark.[5] At the same moment two figures appeared at either side; they were Moses and Elias, one coming up from the valley of Moab, whence he had vanished in the cloud, the other alighting from his flame-girt chariot. The vision thrilled the air with its glories, shedding such strong pulsations of light that the apostles were aroused from slumber; their eyes opened upon these dazzling rays, their ears caught the words wherewith Moses and Elias addressed the Christ. "They were talking of His departure [6] from the world, which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem."

The splendid spectacle was as if about to fade from their sight. Rapt and awestruck Peter cried out:

"Master! it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make three pavilions here, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias!"

What had he in mind when uttering these words? Did the apostle's spirit dream of long days of happiness like this upon the heaven-kissed heights, with Israel's yearning hopes all gratified, with Moses and Elias to add a supreme splendour to the new Kingdom of the Christ? Or was it as a refuge from the pleasures of earth that he was fain to raise these three leafy tents? The Gospel scarcely allows us to indulge in such conjectures, for it goes on to tell us how the disciples were, for the time being, bewildered with fear, and Peter "not knowing what he was saying."

Even while the latter was still speaking a radiant cloud encircled them, and from the silvery mist came a Voice saying —

"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." [7]

Then they fell with faces to the earth, and when, upon recovering somewhat from their terrors, they dared at last to lift their eyes they saw no one but Jesus. Still the apostles would not venture to stand before Him; but the Saviour stepped toward them and touched them, saying —

"Arise and fear not!" [8]

Indeed it was not to inspire their souls with fear that Moses and Elias had appeared on this mountain peak; it was to adore the divinity of the Christ; for, in their person, both the Law and the prophets did homage to Him. They had entered within the cloud the instant that the Voice of the Father commanded man to hearken to His Son, and by this departure proclaimed that their mission was concluded, and that they yielded their places to the one and only Master.

The Lord did not expect that the apostles would at once grasp the full meaning of the marvellous show; it was enough for His purpose that they should treasure the memory of the fact in order to testify to its truth, later on, in the presence of the Church. And so, when in the cool of early dawn He made the descent of the mountainside with them, He did not explain the significance

4 Matt. xvii. 2; Luke ix. 29.
5 Mark ix. 2.
6 Luke ix. 31.
7 Matt. xvii. 5.
8 Mark ix. 8; Matt. xvii. 7.

of this apparition, but rather, with grave words, bound them "not to reveal what they had seen until the Son of Man shall be risen from the dead." [9]

Then only, enlightened from on high, they were to reveal to their brethren "that the majesty of Jesus had been unveiled before them, that before their very eyes He had received all honour from God the Father, and that a voice had come from out that magnificence of glory proclaiming Him, Son of the Most High." [10]

The three apostles obeyed, though they had no clearer insight into the purport of the Saviour's words than they had had into the meaning of His Transfiguration.[11]

"How will He rise from among the dead?" they kept asking themselves; and why had Elias disappeared again? The scribes say that he must go before the Messiah, and once more set all things in order. Is not this our Lord also the Christ?

These questions troubled their minds so much that they finally laid them before the Master.[12]

"It is true that Elias must first come, and that he will restore all things," He answered them. "But I tell you that Elias is already come and they have not known him, but have dealt with him in all things as it pleased them; in like manner the Son of Man must suffer at their hands." Then he explained the oracle of Malachy [13] so clearly to them that they were enabled to distinguish between the two forerunners whom the scribes had confounded. There was that Elias of old, whose return will betoken the last days of the world; while the other Elias, the first herald of the Christ, is John the Baptist.

As they were nearing the foot of the mountain Jesus perceived the rest of His disciples surrounded by a great concourse of people.[14] They had been endeavouring to heal a possessed youth, but their efforts had been of no avail, and the scribes, gloating over their discomfiture, were pushing the argument against them in gleeful triumph, when of a sudden the multitude became aware of the approach of the Lord. Apparently His countenance still burned with the afterglow of its recent splendour, for, after a momentary thrill of awe, with one accord the people flocked about Him to give Him greeting.

"About what were you disputing together?" He inquired.

The scribes' faces had fallen; the disciples were too much abashed to tell of their failure; but a man's voice arose from the midst of the bystanders.

"Master," it said, "I brought you my son, who is possessed by a dumb spirit; wherever it happens to seize him it throws him down upon the earth, and the child foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and so pines away. I have begged your disciples to drive it out, and they were not able; but do you, I beseech you, only look at him, for he is my only child." [15] And pushing his way through the bystanders he flung himself at the Saviour's feet.

In a glance Jesus saw all the eager faces surrounding the poor suppliant; saw among them His relentless foes; saw a crowd more curious than compassionate,

9 Mark ix. 8.
10 2 Peter i. 16–18.
11 Mark ix. 10.
12 Matt. xvii. 10–13.
13 Mal. iv. 5.
14 Mark ix. 13.
15 Luke ix. 38.

above all, saw that His own apostles were still faint-hearted and wavering in their faith.

This spectacle wrung from His heavy heart the cry [16] —

"Unbelieving and depraved race that you are, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"

Then turning to the man who had invoked His help: "Bring your child here," He said.

The boy was brought; hardly had he seen Jesus when, seized with the frenzy, he was dashed down to the ground, and writhed in foaming delirium. Thereupon the Lord asked the father: [17]

"For how long a time has this been going on?"

"From his infancy," responded the latter; "and oftentimes the spirit has thrown him into the fire and into the water in order to destroy him. If ye can do anything, come to our aid — have pity upon us!"

"If you can believe," replied Jesus, "everything is possible to him who believes."

Disquieted by these words the man began to fear lest he had shown too little confidence in the Master, and in his distress the tears came, as he cried, half-weeping —

"Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief."

The Saviour, noting how the curious folk were pressing around Him, turned toward the little lad lying in agony at His feet.

"Deaf and dumb spirit," He said, "I command thee, come from out this child, and never more reenter him."

The demon, raising up the poor possessed body, wracked it once more, fiercely, then came forth with a great cry. Like one stunned the lad fell back to the ground; but with no foam about his lips, with no convulsion in his limbs.

"He is dead!" exclaimed the witnesses of this prodigy.

But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him up, and the child, now whole and sound, stood erect before them.

After this Jesus lost no time in seeking shelter from the curious within the walls of some dwelling; [18] the apostles accompanying Him felt ashamed for their public failure, and cast about for something to account for it. At the time when the Master first gave them their Mission, had He not also endowed them with all power over the devils? Why was it, then, that they had been unable to cast out this one just now?

When questioned in secret He replied that the cause was their own unbelief; for the prediction of His approaching death had destroyed their faith to such a degree that Jesus seems to be at a loss for some object small enough to be likened to the poor residue of their belief in him.[19]

"If you had faith as great as a grain of mustard you should say to this mountain: Move hence to yonder spot! and it would be removed, and nothing shall be impossible to you."

16 Luke ix. 41.
17 Mark ix. 21–24.
18 Mark ix. 27.
19 Matt. xvii. 19.

But in addition to this first cause of their powerlessness, He told them that their souls were still far from seeking that heavenly help which alone can prevail over the hosts of Hell; and that such dominion is bestowed only upon those who, with hearts cleansed by prayer and fasting, rise above this body of flesh.[20]

Jesus withdrew from Tabor at once, taking the road to Capharnaum, careful that no one along the journey should know of His presence. Nevertheless He continued His instructions to the disciples, telling them: "The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and after having been put to death He shall rise again the third day." [21] "But the Apostles understood nothing of what He told them on this subject; His words seemed, as it were, veiled to them"; they indeed dreaded to be forewarned of the coming evil, and so followed their Master in sadness, "not venturing to question him." [22]

II. The Return to Capharnaum

Matt. xvii. 23–26; xviii. 1–35; Mark ix. 32–49; Luke ix. 46–50

This time the reentrance of Jesus into Capharnaum was very different from those homecomings of former days: the little band of companions which was now left to Him traversed the streets almost unnoticed by the indifferent passers-by. Only the taxgatherers made after them and asked Peter:

"Doesn't your Master pay the didrachma?" [23]

This tribute was the ransom which every son of Israel owed to Jehovah as the "Price of his Soul." [24] Ordinarily it was taken up in the month of March. That it was not demanded until autumn in this instance was because Jesus had been absent from Judea for some six months; or it may be that, since He had been regarded hitherto, as by rank, a Doctor, He was considered exempt from this charge laid upon the people.

But now the apostle, sore pressed for an answer by the collectors, assured them that the tax should be paid; yet, almost immediately, he realised that he had been somewhat rash in pledging his Master's word in this offhand manner, and his embarrassment was very evident as he followed Him "into the house." Jesus did not wait for Peter to unburden his mind.

"Simon," He said to him, "how does this appear to your mind? Of whom do the kings of the earth exact tribute? Of their own children, or of foreigners?"

"Of foreigners," was Peter's reply.

"Then the children are free," responded Jesus.

In this way He chose to remind the apostle, who had been a witness of His glory on Tabor, that the Christ, the Son of God, was by this same title freed from the necessity of human laws, and thus exempt from the didrachma, the ransom of sinners.

"Nevertheless," He added, "that we may not give scandal to any one, go to

20 Mark ix. 28, 29.
21 Luke ix. 45.
22 Mark ix. 31.
23 Matt. xvii. 23–26.
24 Exod. xxx. 12.

the lake and cast a hook. The first fish which you shall draw from the water, take it and open its mouth. There you will find a stater; [25] this you will take, and give it to him, for Me and for you."

Jesus, the Son of Man would obey the laws and pay the tribute; but He paid it even as God, by a miracle.

The Gospel does not tell us in whose dwelling this reply was uttered, but it gives us to understand that Jesus had accepted the hospitality of some faithful family, for on this occasion we see a young child close by His side.[26] Very graciously did the Master greet the timid approach of such little ones, whose gentle frankness always gladdened His heart; and now He drew this baby nearer to Him, in order to enforce another lesson upon the minds of His apostles.

"What were you discussing on the road?" He asked them.[27]

This abrupt question disconcerted them, for, seeing the Master walking at some distance ahead of them, "they had been disputing among themselves as to which one of their number was to be considered the greatest." Probably the preference shown to the three companions of Jesus upon Tabor had excited some jealousies and given rise to this wrangle. Crestfallen at finding themselves detected, all stood before Him without a word.

The Master sat down and gathered the Twelve around Him. "If any one wishes to be the first," He said to them, "let him be the least and the servant of all." And he took up the child, folded it in His arms, then, still holding it, He told the apostles that this was to be their model.[28]

"Whoever," He said, "receives a little child like this one before you, in My Name, receives Me, and he who entertaineth Me receiveth not Me but Him that sent Me."

The Lord could not bestow higher praise upon the innocence of little children than this, for He described Himself as of their nature, and commanded that they be entertained even as Himself, even as God, His Father.

Yet the disciples did not realise the full force of His words. John himself, usually more clear-sighted than the rest, now only gathered that Jesus was speaking of those who present themselves in His Name. At once he remembered that recently the Twelve had forbidden a man to drive out devils in the Name of the Christ, because this man was not one of them, and here he broke in upon the Master, desiring to know whether they had done rightly.

"Do not forbid him," Jesus replied; "for there is no one who, after he has worked a miracle in My Name, can at once speak ill of Me thereafter; he who is not against you is for you."

Then He reverted to His first thought, to the young child still nestling in His arms — to those little ones "whose angels forever behold the face of His Father Who is in Heaven." [29]

"If any one," He said, "shall scandalise one of these children who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about his neck and that he be plunged in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of its

25 The Stater (worth about 60 cents) made up the two didrachmas which the tax-gatherers had demanded of Jesus and His Apostles.

26 Mark ix. 36.

27 Mark ix. 32-37.

28 Matt. xviii. 5.

29 Matt. xviii. 10.

scandals! It must needs be that scandals come, but woe to the man by whom the scandal comes!" [30]

With words like these Jesus talked to them in this house at Capharnaum; the conversation lasted much longer than this; for the Master was no longer, as of old, thronged upon by crowds eager to hear His every word; all alone with His disciples, He could adapt His words to their needs. So it was that He made them glimpse the terrors of Hell, adjuring them to sacrifice everything, were it their limbs, or their sight, in order to escape "that Gehenna of fire, where the worm gnaweth and dieth not, where the flame burneth and is not quenched." [31] And then He alluded to an altogether different fire, the flame of love, which, once lighted, does but purify all things which it touches. But among all the conversations of that day, there is none more memorable or momentous than their talk about the rules which He gave His disciples for the adjustment of their differences.

The Christ had decreed that the Church is to be the arbitrator for her children.[32] It is to her that it belongs to interpret the moral law, to determine the rights and the duties of her children, and to disown the unruly, treating them as the Jews treated pagans and publicans. Indeed Jesus had given her the power of binding and of loosing upon earth, and had promised her His never-failing assistance, not simply for the instructing and sanctifying of men's souls, but that they might be maintained in true obedience. Let but two or three persons invested with the authority of the Church be gathered together in the Name of the Christ, "the Father Who is in Heaven will grant them all that they shall ask, and Jesus Himself will be in the midst of them."

Peter hearing these first rules of the Christian Law pronounced, wished that the Master would enunciate them with more precision.[33]

"Lord," he asked, "if my brother sin against me, how many times shall I forgive him? As much as seven times?"

The apostle believed that he was going to great lengths in his indulgent mercy, since the rabbis taught that to pardon three times was the height of perfection; but under the gracious sway of the Christ, forgiveness, like love, must be infinite.

"I do not say: Until seven times," answered the Lord, "but until seventy times seven times." And to make it better understood how rigorously His law of loving-kindness must bind our actions, He set before the apostles' eyes one of those oriental courts where the lightest fancy of their monarch can, in an instant, raise up or demolish the most splendid fortunes.

A king, He told them,[34] set about procuring a reckoning from his ministers; then one of them was brought before him, as powerful a personage as any of their number, who owed his sovereign ten thousand talents.[35] He succeeded in winning the pity of this lord, who forbore to sell him upon the spot, him and his wife and his children. Yet, even before he had passed out from under the

30 Matt. xviii. 6, 7.
31 Mark ix. 43.
32 Matt. xviii. 15–20.
33 Matt. xviii. 21–22.
34 Matt. xviii. 23–35.
35 [About twelve million dollars, if we calculate by Attic talents. In Hebrew talents the amount would be increased by half.]

palace gates a free man, he flung himself upon one of his comrades who owed him a trifling matter — only one hundred denarii.[36] Clutching him by the throat, half-strangling him he repeated —

"Hand over what you owe me!"

The wretched fellow fell at his feet, begging him: "Only have patience, and I will pay you all."

But the other would hearken to nothing, and dragged him to prison until such time as he should pay the whole. The king, having knowledge of all this, bade them call the officer once more.

"Wicked servant," he said to him, "at your prayer I forgave you your debt; should you not have had pity upon your comrade as I have had pity upon you?" And, in his wrath, he delivered him to the torturers.

"So also shall My heavenly Father treat you," concluded Jesus, "if you do not, each one of you, forgive your brother from the bottom of your heart."

So then, charity, much more than justice, should be the foundation of Christian righteousness, or rather one must be blended with the other! "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," [37] even as two sisters.

"If your brother has sinned against you," said the Lord once again,[38] do not wait for him to be sorry; be the first to go to him and to chide him, you and he alone together. If he listens to you, you will have gained your brother; if he does not listen to you, try again, taking two or three persons with you so that it may be decided by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he will not hearken to them, tell the Church," — for her to settle all differences, even as a mother does among her little ones, reviving sweet accord in estranged and angry hearts, oftentimes rebuking us but always loving — ay, most loving when she hurts us, that so she may bring back health and salvation to our souls.

CHAPTER IV

THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES

I. Jesus Goes up Privately to Jerusalem

John vii. 1–10; Luke ix. 51–62; Matt. viii. 19–22

Autumn had come upon the land, and in every direction caravans were forming for the journey Jerusalemward, for it was the season for the Feast of the Tabernacles,[1] the gladdest of all Israel's solemnities. As it was instituted to be a memorial of their march through the wilderness, it lasted seven days, and during that time the whole people lived under leafy shelters woven of boughs, just as their fathers had sojourned in tents. The olive, the pine, the myrtle,

36 [About $15.]
37 Ps. lxxxiv. 11.
38 Matt. xviii. 15-17.
1 John vii. 2.

and the palm trees were now stripped of their branches; little pavilions of green foliage were raised all along the streets, through the squares, upon the level house-tops and above the city ramparts; and for the space of one week Jerusalem bore much the appearance of a forest of verdure. On all sides there was nothing to be heard but songs of joy answering the blare of trumpets which reechoed from the terraces of the Temple, and every Jew in token of rejoicing, bore either a branch of palm or some other fresh bough, laden with citrons or peaches, or any rich fruitage of the season. The gaiety was the more heartfelt and real, because their great Day of Expiation [2] immediately preceded the Feast of the Tabernacles, and consequently they considered themselves purified and freed from sin.

The kinsfolk of the Lord were on the eve of their departure from Capharnaum, to go up to this solemnity. Some of their household bethought themselves to seek Him out; with thoughts and views of Him just as low and grovelling as when formerly they treated Him like a madman,[3] so now they had nothing but complaints and reproaches upon their lips.

"Why so much mystery; why keep himself concealed in this way, so discouraging to his would-be partisans? How many Jews about Jerusalem were ready to receive him well, from the first, if he had only been willing to make himself plainly understood!"

"Leave this place," was the family-advice,[4] "and go into Judea, so that your disciples may see the works which you do; for nobody does his actions in secret, when he wishes to show himself in public; since you are doing these things, manifest yourself to the world."

Such words as these were only another justification of the evangelist's sad reflection. "Even His brethren did not believe in Him."

Jesus showed no surprise.

"My time is not come as yet," He said, quietly; [5] "but your time is always ready, for the world cannot hate you; but Me it hates, because I bear witness that its works are evil. Do you go up to this feast; as for Me, I do not now go thither because My time is not yet accomplished."

There was good reason for the Lord's speaking so obscurely, since it was important that Jerusalem should be unaware of His approaching visit: the Sanhedrin would certainly have profited by the interval to arouse the populace and prepare some pitfall against His coming. So He left His kindred to depart without Him, and while the caravans were filling the routes which keep along the highway of the Jordan, He with His apostles turned aside toward Samaria, taking that road up to the Holy City.

His farewell was a sorrowful one, for He was taking leave of the Galilee. He loved to go to Jerusalem, where only ingratitude and persecution awaited Him. All this Jesus knew beforehand; evermore His gaze rested on the last six months of His ministry as they stretched out interminably before His eyes:

2 Lev. xvi., xxiii. 26–32; Num. xxix. 7–11.
3 Mark iii. 21.
4 John vii. 3–5.
5 John vii. 6–10.

His departure from this world, the Cross, and the tomb. Wherefore (to use St. Luke's expression),[6] "He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem."

Following the road across the plain of Esdralon, they reached the hill-country which forms the northern frontier of Samaria. At its base lies the little town of En-Gannim, "The Fountain of the Gardens." It was the first Samaritan village they encountered; and Jesus sent some of His disciples on ahead to prepare lodgings for them.[7] James and John, charged with this duty, set out confidently enough; for remembering the crowds which hastened to meet Jesus at Jacob's Well, they promised themselves a kindly welcome. But while Israel's festivals were going on, the animosity of the Samaritans knew no bounds; now "inasmuch as the travellers had turned their faces toward Jerusalem," every door was closed against them, and they returned without having found either shelter or food. Their indignation was intense; like true "Sons of the Thunder" their first thought was to call down vengeance from on high.

"Lord," they exclaimed, "would you have us bid fire come down from Heaven and consume them, even as did Elias?"

They forgot that Heaven has other powers beside thunder in its gifts, and gives light much oftener than it lightens, so was it to be under the new reign of Jesus, when zeal and charity alone would enflame the heart of man.

Looking at His disciples, the Master answered them:

"You do not know of what spirit you are; the Son of Man is not come to destroy souls, but to save them." And without blaming these people for having spurned them, He passed on to another hamlet.

As they walked along the highway a scribe came forward, touched by what he had overheard of their talk.

"Master," he said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." [8]

The Lord took no heed either of the words or of the rank of the one accosting Him; far down in this man's heart He beheld an overmastering attachment to the good things of earth; He knew that his inconsiderate fervour would fail him at the first foretaste of the poverty of Jesus, and therefore He answered:

"The foxes have their holes, the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head."

The thought of following a homeless Master cast a chill over the scribe's courage, and he dropped back and disappeared.

That same day and upon this same highroad the Saviour passed before a house of mourning: a son was weeping over the death of his father. Looking up he too knew the presence of the Master, and felt himself drawn to leave all and follow Him. So too Jesus read his heart; then, as quick and ready to help the weak as He was prompt in repressing the presumptuous, He stepped toward him.

"Follow Me!" he said.

Surprised at so sudden an appeal the son hesitated, and asked that he might at least be allowed to bury his father. But the Saviour, seeing that any delay,

6 Luke ix. 51. 7 Luke ix. 52–55. 8 Luke ix. 57, 58; Matt. viii. 19, 20.

even the most legitimate, would destroy all resolution in this wavering soul, caught him away in His company, with that saying which so many Saints have repeated since, when breaking away from all dearest ties of affection —

"Leave the dead to bury their dead, but do you go and announce the Kingdom of God": [9]

One other disciple, called in like manner, also wanted to linger and bide his time.[10]

"Lord," he began, "I will follow you, but first allow me to take farewell of my kindred."

"Whoever," was the reply of Jesus, "puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

The zeal of the true apostle must rise to that height of perfection which makes, not a step only, but even one single backward glance impossible.

And this is all the Gospel tells us of their journey across the hills of Samaria. Jesus walked still more privately and quietly the nearer they approached the Holy City, and thus they found their way within its walls without any one having recognised Him, or even so much as suspecting His presence.

II. Jesus in the Temple

John vii. 11–53

From the first of these festival days the absence of Jesus had been remarked; every one was speaking of Him.[11] The princes of Jewry were on the lookout for His coming; their spies were inquiring on all sides as to where He was staying, and whether He would appear shortly. There was much whispering going on among the worshippers, some of whom were now timidly upholding him. "He is a good man," they urged, while others would answer, "No, he is leading the people astray"; and, forasmuch as His antagonists showed the boldest front, no one dared to declare himself openly in His favour for fear of the Jews.

They were almost in the midst of the feast-making [12] when Jesus entered Jerusalem; repairing at once to the Temple He seated Himself in one of the halls which surrounded the porches, and began to teach.

His presence there was another surprise to the people, and at first they listened to him in wonderment; it was not long, however, before some of the prominent Jews present broke the silence with muttered criticisms.

"By what right does this stranger venture to teach? No rabbi has ever instructed him in sacred literature; this man was brought up at Nazareth — in a carpenter's shop. How should he know the scriptures? he has never studied them."

Jesus heard these detractors, and answered them "that His doctrine was not His, but His Heavenly Father's." [13] It rested altogether with them whether they too would share His knowledge of celestial things; they had "but to do the

9 Luke ix. 59, 60.
10 Luke ix. 61, 62.
11 John vii. 11–13.
12 John vii. 14, 15.
13 John vii. 16–20.

will of God," laying aside all self-seeking and pride, and they would become truly wise. Thus purified, their eyes would be enabled to see "that He spoke not of Himself, was not seeking His own glory, and did nothing wrongfully" in speaking as He had done. But far from hearkening to the voice of God, "they did not even observe His Law," for which they made such show of veneration. Then, changing the defence into an attack, Jesus unmasked their secret motives.

"Why do you seek to kill Me?" He demanded suddenly.

The princes of the people kept silence; but the crowd of onlookers could not catch the drift of this question, and at once assumed that the Christ was beginning to rave in His talk.

"You are possessed of the devil," they told him. "Who is it that is seeking to kill you?"

His only reply [14] was a reference to the miracle of Bethesda, still fresh in their minds. He disclosed how at that time the Sanhedrin had resolved to put Him to death, and thus showed the iniquity of their plots against Him. That it was no violation of the sacred rest to heal the suffering upon the Sabbath day — this the Master had already proved before the Council; yet here again He gave the people an argument which they could easily comprehend.

Moses had received the commandment given to Abraham by God, that they should circumcise the new-born babe upon the eighth day. Now when this day fell on a Sabbath there was never any Jew who would hesitate to overlook the rules of Sabbath-rest in order that his child might be consecrated to Jehovah by the spilling of blood, together with all holy rites. If the precept of circumcision could render such an infraction lawful, how was it that the Sabbath had come to outweigh in importance the divine law of charity? If it was legal to perform such deeds, and to shed the blood of man in order to purify the body, and that only in part, how was it criminal in him to heal the whole body with only a word?

"So then do not judge according to appearances," Jesus concluded, "but according to justice."

This vindication discomfited the enemies of the Lord and delighted the multitude; the citizens of Jerusalem especially, better informed than the visitors as to the malice of their leading men, could not repress their amazement.[15]

"Is not this the man they want to put to death?" they asked. "And now he preaches publicly and no one has a word to say to him. Have the Sanhedrin councillors recognised him as the Christ?"

This, however, was little more than a glimmering of the truth which now flashed upon some few Jews of the town, and for an instant; but it was as quickly overshadowed by their hasty prejudices. The instructions of the scribes recurred to their mind, how the Christ ought to appear unexpectedly — His very origin was to be hidden — and thus He should remain unknown in Israel, until of a sudden He would reveal Himself on the day when He should receive His Anointing at the hands of Elias.

14 John vii. 21, 24. 15 John vii. 25, 26.

"As for this man," they said, "we know whence he is; but when the Christ shall come no one will know whence He comes."

Jesus would not permit this misleading tradition to delude the popular mind any longer. To those who would deny Him the dignity of the Christ, because they knew His home and kindred, He replied that over and above His earthly origin, He had a mysterious beginning.

"I am not come of Myself," He said to them.[16] "He that sendeth Me does truly live; you do not know Him, but I know Him, because I am from Him and He has sent Me."

This sublime refutation great irritated the Jews; from dumb, unreasoning resentment they passed to acts of violence and endeavoured to seize Jesus. "And, notwithstanding, no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not come."[17] Moreover, there were many among those present who believed, and said:

"When the Christ comes will He do more miracles than this man does?"

The respect shown Him by this section of the populace, their ever-increasing faith, the things which were whispered about in favour of Jesus — all these taken together soon alarmed the Sanhedrin people, and they determined to act[18] at once. Some of their satellites were despatched to lay hold upon the Galilean; but all that they were able to do was to mingle with the crowd of listeners, and discover that, though He was well aware of their intentions, He showed no signs of fear. It was useless for his enemies to try to precipitate the fatal hour. He declared "that He was to be with them for yet a little while, until the day when He was to return to His Father." Then indeed they would seek Him, no longer with wicked intent, but repentant and despairing, amid the ruins of Jerusalem.

"You shall seek Me and you shall not find Me," He said; "nor shall you be able to come there where I am."

"Where will he go," they murmured among themselves, "that we may not find him? Will he go to the Gentiles dispersed over the world? will he become a Doctor among them?" And they were at a loss to imagine what Jesus meant by saying this.

Meanwhile the festal celebrations were still progressing, and for the last time the Holy Waters had been poured out within the Temple. It may be well to recall something of the significance of this symbolic rite, for on the morrow Jesus would allude to it. Every morning during those seven days a priest descended to the well-spring of Siloë, and in a golden vessel drew up three measures of water from the fountain, with which he returned, bearing it before him in solemn state. Upon his entrance within the porches the trumpets sounded, accompanying him with the wild clash of their symphonies, while he mounted to the highest step of the Altar; there two great jars had been already set forth, one made of silver, into which the ministering priest poured the water brought from Siloë; the other of gold, which he filled with wine. These liba-

16 John vii. 28–31. 17 John vii. 30. 18 John vii. 32–36.

tions once performed, the whole people entoned the Hallel,[19] waving their rustling palm-branches, and giving way to such glad transports of feeling that the rabbis tell us it is impossible for one who never witnessed it to conceive the universal sense of joy.

But on the eighth day [20] this ceremony no longer took place; those who, in the early morning, ascended to the Temple to offer sacrifice, instead of the joyous songs and the chanting, found a religious stillness brooding over the sanctuary. This was the moment Jesus chose to explain the meaning of their sacred rite.

Standing in the centre of the porches He cried aloud:

"If any one thirst let him come to Me, and let him drink! He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture sayeth: Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water!"

"He was speaking," adds the evangelist, "of the Holy Spirit which his disciples were to receive"; and this, He promised the Jews, would no longer be like that weak spring-water,[21] but like a mighty river which should fill them with overflowing gifts of grace.

This utterance made a great impression upon the people; more than one heart waiting there had long yearned after waters which would not flee away and vanish, like those of Siloë; and even so in their Sacred Oracles they had discerned certain obscure inklings as to a promised never-failing Fountain, wherefrom the streams of truth should flow for all alike. Had the hour at last arrived for that great marvel? Many believed so. Some were already saying,[22] "Truly, this is the Prophet!"

"It is the Christ!" they shouted.

But the scribes sternly repressed these tokens of homage, everywhere objecting:

"Is it possible that the Christ should come out of Galilee? Do we not read in scripture that He must be born of the blood of David, and in the village of Bethlehem, where David dwelt?"

The multitude of common people knew not how to answer this argument, and began to share something of their teachers' resentment against Him; some indeed, much disquieted by the strong language of the doctors, were eager for arresting the Christ at once; others, however, took up the defence, and the latter must have been the more numerous because no one ventured to touch Him. Even the guards commissioned to seize Him comprehended clearly enough that any act of violence would be likely to arouse this great concourse of people; they therefore returned to the pontiffs and the Pharisees. These frowned upon the officers in stern displeasure.

"Why have you not brought him here?" they said.

"Never man spoke like this man," replied the guards; and they went on to explain what command He exerted over the crowds. But in their vexation the members of the Sanhedrin loaded them with sarcastic queries.

19 Ps. cxii. to cxvii.
20 John vii. 37–39.
21 John iv. 14.
22 John vii. 40–49.

"So, then, you too are befooled by him, are you? Is there a single one of the magistrates and Pharisees who has believed in him? As for this rabble, who know nothing of the Law, they are accursed."

Only one member of the Great Council ventured to utter a protest against this iniquitous action.[23] It was Nicodemus, the scribe who once came by night to seek the Lord. Ever since that time, when his heart was first touched by grace, though too weak-souled to give himself up to its innermost promptings, he had always retained a secret love for the Master; now he spoke out with some feeling.

"Does our Law allow us to condemn a man without having heard him, and without knowing what he has done?"

Timid and mild as this defence was, it enraged the Sanhedrin.

"Ah, you too! Are you a Galilean, then?" they shouted at him. "Examine the scriptures, and learn that no prophet ever came out of Galilee."

Amid the storm of excitement, these Doctors of Israel forgot that the country which they so despised had been, in truth, the fruitful mother of Prophets; for out of Thisbe had come Elias, and from the regions of the north, Jonas, Nahum, and Osee. Such a season of blindness and heated passion left no opportunity for wiser counsels, and they broke up the sitting without determining upon anything definitely, each one returning to his own home.

CHAPTER V

THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES — *continued*

I. The Adulteress

John viii. 1–59

When dusk had settled over the city, Jesus walked without the walls, directing His steps toward the Mount of Olives.[1] This was the spot where He had been accustomed to pass the night during the several times He sojourned in Jerusalem, whether because He had been invited to take shelter in some dwelling-place thereabouts, or, it may be, not having where to rest His head, He sought slumber under cover of the spreading groves. At daybreak He wended His way back to the Temple; at once "all the people came to Him, and having seated Himself, He taught them." The Sanhedrin had not in the least renounced the pursuit; but comprehending that, more than anything else, it was expedient for them to draw the multitude away from Him, they turned their whole attention to this end. Something occurred immediately to further their projects.

The seven days spent beneath their sylvan huts were not without peril for the uprightness of the Israelites; oftentimes merriment degenerated into license,

23 John vii. 50–52.

1 John viii. 1, 2.

and it so happened that during this very night a woman had been taken in adultery. The custom of stoning a guilty wife had ceased to be enforced for a long time now; [2] divorce alone satisfied the vengeance of the wronged husband; and at this period especially, when the Roman authorities reserved to themselves all rights over life and death, no other punishment was possible.

None the less did the Sanhedrin councillors drag the sinning woman up to the Temple, and pushing her into the presence of the Lord —

"Master," they said,[3] "this woman has just now been taken in adultery. Moses commanded us in the Law to stone the woman guilty of this crime. What say you as to this?"

They meant to oblige Him either to put Himself in opposition to Moses by rescuing the sinner, or else force Him to consign her to the death torture. Now they foresaw that the latter decision would not only destroy His great renown for gentleness in the people's eyes, but would moreover expose Him to the vengeance of Rome.

Jesus, at a glance, detected the snare; beneath this zealous exterior of piety, He saw clearly that there was nothing but hypocrisy. Hence he deigned no reply, but stooping down toward the ground, He fell to writing with His finger in the sand. This He did to indicate that any profitless occupation, such as this of tracing letters in the dust, disconnected and meaningless signs though they were, yet in His eyes seemed worthier of attention than the query proposed by these fanatic Doctors.

And on their part they chose to act as if unconscious of the Master's disdain; [4] they persisted in attracting His notice to the shame-struck, wretched woman, and waxed the more urgent with look and voice. At last Jesus drew Himself up.

"Let him who is without sin among you," He said, "cast the first stone."

Without decrying the law of blood, still He would not have any hands essay the execution of its mandates save such as were worthy of the charge. Not a finger was lifted in this assembly, which until now had shown itself so arrogant. Jesus, once more half-kneeling on the ground, began to write again; "it was their sins He was recording in the sand," so says a curious lection in an ancient Codex, and each man there understood this mute language, whereby they stood self-convicted. Scribes and Pharisees were alike dumbfounded and silent; their hands crept away from the sinner's garments, their eyes fell, overwhelmed with shame they slunk away, one after another — first the older ones among them, their souls consumed with evil spite, then the younger men. Soon in all this open space — here in the centre of the crowded court — there remained no one else besides Jesus and the guilty woman, "the uttermost misery, and the uttermost mercy," here left finally face to face.

She was still shuddering at the feet of the Master. Once more Jesus stood erect, looked about Him, and seeing no one but her —

"Woman," He said, "where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?"

2 Deut. xxii. 22-24. 3 John viii. 3-6. 4 John viii. 7-11.

"No one, Lord."

"And neither will I condemn you; go and sin no more."

This pardon was a marvel of charity, yet it so completely overturned the received code of morality that for a long while it continued to be a stumbling-block for the Church. Always pitiless to the adulteress, those Eastern nations who became Christians were loath to believe that Jesus, while so sensitive as to everything pertaining to chastity, would publicly protect a fallen woman, humiliate her accusers, and shield her from punishment. Would not such indulgence merely embolden men in crime? This fear led a great number of pastors to pass over the gospel story in silence; some Churches went so far as to suppress it in their copies, and so now-a-days we vainly look for it in many ancient manuscripts. Succeeding ages learned to draw a juster idea of its meaning, and so restored this page of the gospel, which sets the heart of Jesus before us in the truest light; indeed, there is none which teaches in clearer accents that the real triumph of chastity lies, not so much in flying any contact with the defiled soul, but rather in purifying it, even as the ray of sunlight penetrates the mire and illumines it without being soiled thereby. And it was this the Master proposed to show by His tender mercy toward the erring woman — that charity and grace are mightier than punishments to prevent wrongdoing; and so too He wished to remind men, weakly indulgent as they are as regards their own disorderly deeds, yet so severe toward women, that their mutual crime is of equal offence in the eyes of Divine Justice; most of all He meant to tell sinning woman, spurned and despised by the world, that there is no dark stain which the hand of Jesus cannot wipe away, no fault which He will not pardon unto the repentant sinner.

Thereupon Jesus proceeded to the treasury, where He sat down and continued to instruct the people.[5] The part of the Temple known by this name was the court reserved for women, where there stood thirteen caskets, placed there to receive offerings. Within this open space rose two great candlesticks, fifty cubits in height and lacquered with gold. Every night, during the festival season, the glare of its sparkling lights could be seen over the whole town and all round about the populace danced to the sound of flutes and every sort of instruments.

Jesus looking at these great torches, now extinguished, was moved there to say:

"I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me does not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." [6]

Here again came a new swarm of Pharisees, who mingled with the other auditors of all ranks, and at once found fault with this statement, declaring that it was worthless regarded as evidence, inasmuch as Jesus rendered it to Himself. The Lord replied that light does not have to prove its existence, it needs only to shine; nevertheless, if, with the Law, they demanded the testimony of two witnesses,[7] in addition to His own self-evident testimony He might add that of the Father Who had sent Him into this world.

5 John viii. 20. 6 John viii. 12–20. 7 Deut. xvii. 16.

The Pharisees greeted these words with loud mockery, bidding Him produce this witness whereof He spoke. It was of no avail for Jesus to urge that, if they would but open their eyes, they would see in Him the Father; this allusion to His divinity only the more enraged the muttering lawyers and scribes, in so far that many proposed to take violent measures against Him on the spot, but this time too, "no one stopped Him because His hour was not yet come."

Without showing any signs of fear Jesus continued speaking; [8] going on to tell them, as He had done more than once heretofore, of His early death and the miseries which it would bring down upon the Jews.

"I go away," He said, "and you shall seek Me and you shall die in your sins. Whither I go, you cannot come."

"Is he about to kill himself, then?" exclaimed the princes of Jewry; "because he says: 'You cannot come whither I go.'"

The popular belief held that the man guilty of suicide sunk himself to the nethermost regions of hell. Was the Christ about to descend to those dark abysses, so that no one might be able to follow Him? Jesus made these scoffers realise that hell was destined for them rather than for Him.

"You are from below," He said to them, "and I am from on high; you are of the world, I am not of the world. I have told you that you shall die in your sins; ay, if you do not believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

"Who are you?" was the Jew's reply.

"That which I have told you from the beginning," Jesus answered,[9] and He reiterated what He had declared so many times, that all things pertaining to Him, His teaching, His knowledge of men, His right to judge them, came, not from Himself, but from the Father Who had sent Him.

These words merely puzzled without enlightening His antagonists, for they did not conceive that He had God for His Father; and so the Lord added that only His death could dissipate their blindness. Then He spoke of His union with God, of His obedience, of the Cross whereon He was to be lifted up, while even there His Father would not abandon Him in utter loneliness; and so forceful were His words that many, even some of the most headstrong, felt their hearts drawn towards Him.

But it was, after all, only a faint flash of faith, so weak and flickering that the lightest breath would extinguish it. It was put to the test immediately. Addressing these hearts now touched so unexpectedly, Jesus said to them: [10]

"If you faithfully observe My words you shall be truly My disciples and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." His last words reawakened their prejudices.

"We are children of Abraham," they responded, "and we have never been in slavery; why then do you say, 'You shall be freed?'"

The Master showed them that as long as they were sinners they were the slaves of sin, and could only expect the lowest position in their Father's Home; it was for Him, the Son and Heir of the Household, to deliver them from this bondage, that they might become really free.

8 John viii. 21. 9 John viii. 25–30. 10 John viii. 31–47.

"Abraham is our father," the Jews objected.

"If you are the children of Abraham," replied Jesus, "do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, Who have told you the truth which I have learned of God. Abraham did not thus."

They only gathered from this that Jesus was speaking of some infernal powers by which they had been misled, even as their ancestors had been ensnared by heathen divinities, and that therefore He charged them, in the figurative speech of Prophecy,[11] with having prostituted their souls with lying, so that thereby they were become the offspring of sin.

"We are not born of fornication," they interposed, "we have but one Father — God."

"If God were your Father," answered Jesus, "you would love Me, because I am born of God, and I come to you on His behalf. . . . But you are the children of the devil, and you do his works. He has been a murderer from the beginning, and he has never rested in the truth, because the truth is not in him. Which one of you will accuse Me of sin?" Then, showing the falsehood and treachery of him who is a liar and the father of lies He contrasted with this the holiness of His word, and tried to move these doctors, who now for an instant had believed in Him, to accept the truth.

But henceforth their own overweening self-conceit, cruelly wounded by His words, was to render the hearts of these sectaries impervious to grace; they repaid Him with fierce abuses, treating Jesus as though He was a Samaritan and possessed by the devil.[12] The Lord endeavoured to calm this tempest of passion, showing them that His only end was the glory of the Father, and promising everlasting life to those who received His doctrine.

"Of a truth, of a truth, I say this to you, if any one keeps My word he shall never know death."

In this the Jews only saw another blasphemy.

"Now we know well enough that you are possessed by the devil," they said; "Abraham is dead, and the prophets and you say: 'If any one keeps My word, he shall never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham who is dead? and the prophets are dead also. Who do you pretend you are?"

Once again the Saviour spoke to them of His union with the Father Who glorifies Him, "this Father," He added, "Whom you call your God, and notwithstanding you know Him not; and if I told you that I know Him not, I should be a liar like unto you, but I do know Him and I keep His word. Abraham your father desired earnestly to see my day; he hath seen it, and hath rejoiced thereat."

"What!" shouted the Jews, "you have not lived fifty years as yet, and you have seen Abraham!"

As His only answer to this, Jesus proclaimed Himself eternal even as the everlasting Father:

11 Deut. xxxi. 16; Is. i, 21; Ezech. xvi. xx. 30, etc.

12 John viii. 48-59.

"Of a truth, of a truth, I say unto you, before Abraham had been made, I am."

At these words, the wrath of the Jews knew no further bounds; with one accord they sprang for a heap of stones collected for the work of the Temple, intending to stone the Nazarene then and there. But Jesus, profiting by the moment of confusion, disappeared in the crowd and departed without suffering any hurt.

II. The Man Born Blind

John ix. 1–41; x. 1–21

Once without the Temple walls Jesus regained a quarter of the town where all was quiet, calm, and untroubled; walking unmolested along the city streets He saw a man blind from his birth who was begging, and He stopped near him. The disciples, now reassured by the tranquillity of the Lord, gathered around the disabled man.

"Master," they asked, "who has sinned; was it he or his parents, that he should be born blind?" [13]

The belief that God avenged the wickedness of the fathers upon the children [14] led the Jews to look upon every misfortune as a chastisement for some misdeed, and to ask themselves always who was to blame. Charity forbids all such conjectures; it was neither the sin of the blind man nor those of his family which had brought down upon him this affliction, which we must simply regard as one of those trials to which all men are subject. This particular case was the will of God, and intended to be an instrument whereby He chose to manifest His glory.[15]

The night of death was drawing fast upon the Christ; but some few hours of daylight were still left to Him, and these He declared He would use "in doing the works of Him who sent Him"; and wishing likewise to refresh the drooping courage of His apostles by a new prodigy, "As long as I am in the world," he said, "I am the Light of the world."

After having spoken thus He spat on the earth, made clay of the spittle, and therewith anointed the eyes of the blind man.

"Go," He said to him, "wash in the pool of Siloë."

This spring bore one of the many names foreshadowing the Messiah — "The One Sent, the Siloäh" — and hence it carried with it a promise of sweet light and refreshing health to the weak and suffering. The man went down thither, washed with perfect trustfulness in the Master's words, and returned cured.

His eyes for the first time in his life sparkled with light, brightening up his whole countenance. The folk who lived in the neighbourhood, as well as those

13 John ix. 2. 14 Exod. xx. 5. 15 John ix. 3–7.

who had seen him just now asking an alms, were loath to believe him the same person.

"Is not this the man who sat yonder and begged?" they exclaimed.[16]

"Yes, it is he," some responded.

"No," others insisted, "it is some one who resembles him."

But he told them, "I am he."

"How is it your eyes are opened?" they demanded.

"That man," he replied, "whom they call Jesus made clay, anointed my eyes with it, and told me: 'Go to the pool of Siloë and wash.' So I went, I washed and I see!"

"Where is He?" they asked.

"I do not know," was his reply.

"Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made this clay, and opened the eyes of the blind man." [17] He had therefore disregarded the dictates of the rabbis, which forbade the application of any remedies upon the sacred day, even the rubbing of an aching eye with saliva; moreover, it was just at the moment when the Pharisees were quite prepared to stone Him that the Christ chose publicly to infringe their rules. The witnesses of the marvel hurried away to inform the Sanhedrin of what had just happened. The great council held no regular session upon Sabbath days, but the incidents which had been exciting the town since early morning were enough to keep a majority of its members gathered together in the porches. The blind man, whose sight had been restored, was brought before them; at once they proceeded to investigate his case, and questioned him as to how the thing was done. The man merely repeated —

"He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

This story disconcerted and puzzled them. There were some among them who said: "This man does not come of God, because he does not observe the Sabbath." Others there were, however, who were more honest and direct; these objected, "How can a sinner do these wonders?" And so there arose a dissension among them. They began anew to cross-question the man who had been blind.

"What do you say?" they asked; "who do you say this man is who opened your eyes?"

"He is a prophet," quickly came the answer.

Noting the firmness of this avowal the Sanhedrin councillors foresaw that there was only one resort left them; they must immediately convict this man of being an impostor; so then they refused to believe that he had ever been blind and had recovered his sight until they had summoned his parents before them.

The poor couple, of as humble station as their son, appeared before the supreme tribunal in much terror; but despite their distress they preserved that shrewdness which is a characteristic of their race.[18]

"Is this your son?" they were interrogated. "You say that he was born blind; how is it then that he can see now?"

"We know that he is our son," they retorted, "and that he was born blind.

16 John ix. 8-12. 17 John ix. 14-18. 18 John ix. 19-34.

But how he sees now we do not know. Question him; he is of age; let him speak for himself."

In this way they hoped to shield themselves, frightened as they were; for the Sanhedrin had before this publicly decreed that if any one confessed Jesus to be the Messiah he should be excommunicated and driven out of the synagogue.

The Sanhedrin had no alternative now but to recall the man born blind, and to adjure him to contradict his first statement.

"Give glory to God," they urged, "we know that this man is a sinner."

"If he is a sinner," he returned, "I know nothing about it; all I know is this, that I was blind and now I see."

This response showed them that they had to do with a man who was not only upright, but steadfast and of a generous soul, and that they would not be able to browbeat him as they had just done his parents. Not knowing how to proceed, or perhaps seeking to pick some flaw in his evidence, they recommenced the cross-examination.

"What was it he did to you?" they asked; "how did he open your eyes?" But their man was tired with these useless repetitions.

"I have explained it to you, and you have heard it. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too wish to become His disciples?"

Smarting under this irony they lost self-control, and loaded him with taunts.

"You yourself may be His disciple," they exclaimed, "but for us we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this fellow we do not know where he may come from."

The man born blind, far from being terrified, only began to banter them more boldly.

"It is really astonishing," he said, "that you should not know where He comes from, and, nevertheless, He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God does not hearken to sinners, but if any one honours Him and does His will He hears him. It was never yet heard tell that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. So if this man were not from God He could do nothing."

At these words the Sanhedrin rose in mighty indignation; a beggar to dare hold up his head before the masters of Israel!

"You are nothing but a mass of sins," they cried, "and do you propose to teach us!" Then they caught hold of him, and had him driven forth from the synagogue.

This outrage put him in the same category with his benefactor, for if Jesus preached in the synagogues no longer it was probably because He was excluded therefrom by an excommunication emanating from the Sanhedrin. The divine Master could not forget this, the first confessor persecuted for His holy cause. He sought him out, and having found him —

"Do you believe in the Son of God?" He said to him.[19]

"Who is He, Lord," answered the man born blind, "so that I may believe in Him?"

[19] John ix. 35–41.

"You have seen Him," Jesus said to him, "and it is He Who is speaking to you."

"I believe, Lord!" said the beggar, and falling down he adored Him.

Jesus hastened to exalt this strong living faith as the triumph of that light which He had brought into the world, manifesting itself as mighty to enlighten the lowly as it was to dazzle and blind the proud; this the Master proclaimed so powerfully that some Pharisees who had mixed with the crowd felt themselves moved by these tokens of authority.

"Are we blind also?" they said.

Jesus answered them that no one is held responsible for being born in darkness; the wrong consists in obstinately persisting therein.

"If you were blind," He told them, "you would have no sin, but you say, 'We see!' Therefore your sin remaineth."

But these haughty sectaries did not deserve to engage the Lord's attention longer; turning from them toward the beggar He began by means of a parable to comfort him for having been put outside the synagogue.

In this new similitude, the Master pictured a scene familiar to every Jew's memory, reminding them of one of those sheepfolds which to this day people the lonely wilds of Juda.[20] Indeed, they still preserve the same general features. A massive wall of stone encircles them and this is crowned with clumps of thorn bushes; herein the shepherd shuts himself up with his flock at nightfall, for in the shadows lurk many and various foes. The wolf prowls round about, sometimes a panther at a bound overleaps the enclosure, or some robber of the night, finding the narrow gate fast barred, climbs up and creeps along the wall. But the shepherd is watching; he wards off all danger; and, with the dawning light, taking up his crooked staff he is the first to leave their little fortress; one by one he counts his fleecy charge, then leads the way toward the fresh pastures, his gentle company gambolling around him as he walks. Every now and again he utters a shrill call, and then the scattered sheep huddle panting about his feet; but let a stranger's voice break the stillness, at once all stop short, affrighted, with heads uplifted, then scamper away, "for they know not the voice of the stranger."

After this fashion Jesus traced the likeness of the Church, that fold whose door is the Christ, whereof no one deserves to be called a pastor if he enters not in the name of Jesus, and does not hold commission from Him. Many false prophets had come before Him, who had misled the flock of God's people, yet whatever semblance of truth they might assume they were all, whether priests or scribes or Pharisees, nothing less than robbers, creeping in to pillage and destroy; or at the best, wretched hirelings, who were at little pains for the safety of the sheep, but took to flight at sight of the wolf, leaving the flock to be scattered and killed. Then said Jesus, "I am the Good Shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me . . . I am come that they may have life more abundantly."

20 John x. 1–18.

Such was the stronghold which Jesus flung open wide to receive this sturdy, humble fellow who had just been hunted out of the synagogue.

But now his glance swept a wider prospect, and straightway there arose that ever present thought of the gentiles, cut off from any community with the Jewish race, and he added: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; these too I must bring; they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one only fold and one only Shepherd."

"I am the Good Shepherd," said He again; "the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep"; and the Bloody Sacrifice which was ever uppermost in His thoughts forthwith engrossed His attention. He spoke of it to the crowds, openly announcing "that no one would rob Him of His life, but that He gave it up of Himself, and would take it up again by His own inherent power." So then He was to die in the fulness of sacrifice, "that He might obey His Father, and it is for this that His Father loveth Him" with an almighty, infinite love.

These last words left the people divided in feeling. Thus on the evening of a day when so much of malice had worked its will against Him, and so many hands had been uplifted to stone Him, all throughout Jerusalem one heard nothing but whispered slanders mingling with the more favourable voices.[21]

"He is possessed," said some, "he is a madman, why listen to him any longer?"

"These are not the words of one possessed," others replied, "and besides, does the devil restore sight to men born blind?"

Availing Himself of this division in public opinion, Jesus departed from Jerusalem immediately, for the hatred of the Sanhedrin had waxed too violent for Him to withstand it any longer.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES

Luke x. 1–42; Matt. xi. 20–30

His divinity in no way weakened the force of those human feelings and sympathies which always filled the heart of Jesus. Like us, He delighted to revisit whatever He had loved on earth, His home, His country, the places which had witnessed His labours and His griefs. By every kindred title, then, Galilee was so much endeared to Him that no ingratitude on the part of its people would wean Him from such longings to return. Hence it was thitherwards He directed His steps upon leaving Jerusalem. But He was to encounter the same coldness as before the feast; only the apostles and a little bevy of disciples persevered devotedly at His side. Thus forsaken, the Lord was constrained to bear the good tidings elsewhere; so choosing seventy-two Galileans who had remained faithful to Him, He deputed them to go before Him "into every town and into every place whither He was to come." [1]

21 John x. 19–21. 1 Luke x. 1–12.

Saint Luke notes the fact that these newly elect were not the same as the Twelve first chosen; so, too, their mission was different, and this the Master indicates by the instructions which He addressed to them, for, out of all the advice formerly given the apostles, Jesus here repeated, for the benefit of the seventy-two disciples, only such as would presuppose a ministry of short duration.

For them it was to be limited to a few days' labour in the vast harvest fields. They need have no anxiety for the future, but straightway start forth, without purse, without wallet, shod with only such footwear as they had on; not wasting time along the wayside in overlong greetings, but keeping steadfastly to their appointed end, and, once arrived at the city whither He sent them, there fulfil His commissions without delay.

"Do not pass from house to house," so said the Lord, "enter into the first one which opens to receive you, and there remain, eating and drinking whatever they shall set before you."

For one accustomed to the ceremonious forms observed by the Orientals, these precepts are far from surprising. Today, when any stranger enters an Arabian village, invitations are proffered him on every hand, and everybody presses him to pass from one friendly board to another. Jesus warned them not to waste the precious hours in such outward shows of friendliness; these, His evangelists, were not commissioned to take part in worldly feastings, but rather to recall men to repentance, to heal the sick, to prepare the ways of the Lord, and to publish far and wide the Kingdom of God. If any city refused to harbour them, He bade them go into the public squares, and tell the rebellious city: "Against you we shake off even the dust of your town which has cleaved to our feet. Yet know ye this, the Kingdom of God is nigh!" "I say unto you," added the Lord, "in the day of judgment, Sodom shall be treated more leniently than that city."

Obedient to the orders which they had received, the disciples set out two by two, while Jesus lingered upon the shores of the lake. As aforetime, so now the Saviour wandered through this border-country but not with the same results, for He found His words resented, and slighted, Himself left in solitude, despised and neglected, while through this land so loaded with tokens of His loving-kindness He must needs wend His weary way as though He were an alien and a stranger. Cut to the heart by such ungratefulness, He turned away from these cities of the lake, and spoke words of bitterest rebuke, forasmuch as He had loved them better than all the rest:

"Woe to thee, Chorozaïn! Woe to thee, Bethsaïda! for if Tyre and Sidon had seen the miracles which have been wrought in you, they would have long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. But Tyre and Sidon shall be treated more mercifully than you in the Day of Judgment. And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, thou shalt be thrust down even unto Hell." [2]

Departing from the lakeside, Jesus took the road going to Perea, so as to rejoin His disciples there. On the way, He saw them returning to Him over-

2 Luke x. 13–15.

flowing with joy. In giving them their commission the Master had only spoken of the dangers ahead, of wolves ravening about their path, of doors barred and cities closed against their approach; He had bestowed on them no other powers beside that one of curing the sick, and lo! at the mere sound of His name all things yielded to them!

"Master," they cried, "even the devils are subject to us in your Name."

Jesus did not disdain to share their gladness, but it was that He might lift them up to a conception of nobler things.

Surely there was nothing surprising in that His Name should prove victorious over the hosts of hell, for, in the very first hour of revolt, the guilty angel had been brought face to face with the eternal Son of the Father, nor even then could he brook His glance, but fell from the heavenly heights like a flashing thunderbolt.[3] The Word when once incarnated had but increased the awful depth of this fall and stripped the Prince of Darkness of his last weapons. Using the words of the Psalmist,[4] the apostles were to "tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon they should trample under their feet." Poison, venom, raging beasts, all baneful things of this world, the consequences of sin and the strength of Satan, had now escaped his foul dominion; the strength of the enemy had been deflowered, and hereafter nothing could harm the disciples of Jesus.

"Nevertheless," added the Master, "do not rejoice in this that the evil spirits are subject to you, but rejoice in this that your names are written in Heaven."

Saying these words, the Saviour, rapt in ecstasy, was absorbed in the Bosom of God.

"I praise Thee, O Father," He said,[5] "Lord of Heaven and earth, for that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and that Thou hast revealed them unto little ones. Yea, Father, thus it is because such hath been Thy will. All things have been delivered Me by My Father, and no one knoweth Who the Son is, save the Father, and Who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whom it hath pleased the Son to reveal Him."

What had called forth these rapturous words, whose like have been but seldom heard from Jesus' lips since the day His native land disowned Him? Evidently it was the eager welcome which those towns had given the seventy-two disciples, going before Him to announce His advent. Overflowing with the strong feelings inspired by His prayer, the Saviour bespoke His disciples: [6]

"Come unto Me all you that have laboured and are weighed down with any trouble and I will ease your burthens. Take My yoke upon you, and learn that I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find," in following Me, "rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burthen light."

Uttering this gracious invitation, He broke forth with words of great gladness: [7]

"Happy eyes which see that which you see! I say to you many prophets and

[3] Luke x. 18–20. [4] Ps. xci. 13. [5] Luke x. 21, 22; Matt. xi. 25–27. [6] Matt. xi. 28–30. [7] Luke x. 23, 24.

kings have desired to see that which you see and have not seen it, and to hear that which you hear and have not heard it."

This joy was to be marred very shortly. There was no region so secluded that the scribes could not find their way thither; one of them now pushed forward trying to tempt Jesus.

"Master," said he, "what shall I do to possess eternal life?" [8]

The Lord saw his design at a glance, He referred this lawyer to his authorities and asked him:

"What do you read there?"

Long beforehand Moses had revealed the two great precepts of a Christian life: [9] This Jew could only repeat what from century to century the prophets and doctors had taught to Israel:

"Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."

"You have answered aright," Jesus said to him; "do this and you shall live."

Words which were not likely to satisfy the scribe, for they humiliated him by exposing the thoughtlessness of his query, and evidenced that Jesus was better versed in the Law than himself. He made shift to quibble and suggest difficulties.

"And who is my neighbour?" he objected.

The hatred which the Jews cherished against foreigners would have prevented the Lord from extorting any righteous response from the mouth of such an adversary; He therefore turned for an answer to the very places lying round about them.

At this time the divine Master was traversing the mountainous stretch of country which extends from Jericho to Jerusalem. The track which He was following, justly named "the Highway of Blood," climbs up athwart the hills whose white crests gleam on either hand like sea-waves beaten into froth by the fierce winds. While passing through this wilderness the wayfarer is often attacked by the Bedouins, and left there wounded and in instant peril of death unless some charitable person happens that way and lends him his assistance.

The Lord set one of these oft-told adventures in the form of a parable; [10] how a man had fallen into the brigands' clutches, who proceeded to plunder his goods, covered him with wounds and left him lying in the road half dead. Between the Holy City and Jericho (which is a city of the priesthood), there are always many Levites going and coming. It so chanced that a priest, on his way down from Jerusalem, noticed the wounded man; taking the other side of the road he continued on his journey. A Levite came next; he stopped, looked at the bleeding body and like the priest went his way. Yet a third traveller came after them — the offspring of a race which Israel held accursed; he was, notwithstanding, a good Samaritan, and a worthy type of the Saviour. At sight of the wounded man he was touched with compassion, drew nigh to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; then he put him on his horse, brought him to an inn and there tended him. The next morning he

8 Luke x. 25–37. 9 Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18. 10 Luke x. 10–36.

took two denarii from his purse and giving them to their host: "Take care of him," he said, "and whatever you spend beside I will repay you on my return."

"Which one of these three," Jesus asked, "would seem to you to be the neighbour of the man that fell into the robbers' hands?"

There was no room left him for hesitating; albeit the scribe was loath to pronounce even the name Samaritan, saying reluctantly:

"It would be he who took compassion on him."

Jesus had nothing more to add; by one of those innocent stratagems in which Orientals take so much delight, He had constrained His adversary to explain the nature of true charity.

"Go," He said to the discomfited Doctor of Laws, "go and do you likewise."

Although the high-road which Jesus was now following leads to Jerusalem He did not, however, push on as far as the town. Saint Luke shows us that He rested at Bethany,[11] a village built upon the highlands of Juda, and only separated from the Holy City by the Mount of Olives. In this small town there lived a family that Jesus loved, Lazarus with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. The first had always bided in maiden retirement within her brother's house; the second was she who had once been wofully famous under that name of the Magdalene, the wanton woman; but now redeemed, restored by the Christ for the love of her own home circle. Was it this unhoped for grace which had knit so firm a bond of friendship betwixt Jesus and the little household at Bethany? And may we believe that Lazarus was the charitable rabbi of whom the Talmud speaks? Like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, had he listened to Jesus speaking before the Sanhedrin and there recognised in Him the Messiah? All these conjectures are equally plausible since the evangelists do not tell us how Lazarus entered the Kingdom of Christ; all that they inform us is that he was of the high station, a friend of Jesus, and blest in being allowed to offer Him hospitality. As it chanced on this day, the Master had not been expected at Bethany, for his arrival evidently put the whole house in commotion. Martha especially was untiring in her efforts to procure everything for their comfort, watching keenly lest anything should be lacking. Mary, in a calmer mood, had seated herself at the feet of Jesus, listening to His words, drinking deep draughts from the wellspring of life. Martha was observing her, and her jealousy was at last aroused; addressing Jesus, she asked Him —

"Lord, do you not see that my sister leaves me to serve alone? Bid her then, to help me."

"Martha, Martha," Jesus answered her, "you harass yourself and worry about many things; yet there is one thing needful. Mary has chosen the better part; it shall not be taken away from her."

Not for having done too much for Him did the Master blame His hostess, but for letting herself be diverted from Him by external cares. Happier far is that friend of the Christ who is altogether absorbed in Him! Blest indeed are those contemplative souls, who, after her example no longer hear the noise and tumult of the world, safe within their quiet cloisters. Theirs is the one thing needful,

11 Luke x. 38–42.

the soul that has found peace in love; it is theirs to taste fully the sweetness of this saying of the Master: "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."

CHAPTER VII

THE PHARISEES OF PEREA

I. The Lord's Prayer — The Two Blind Men — The Dumb Devil — The Sign from on High

Luke xi. 1–36; Matt. ix. 27–34; xii. 38–45

On leaving Bethany Jesus again crossed over the Jordan in order to evangelise the mountainous country of Galaäd, then under the rule of Herod Antipas, and known by the name of Perea. He is in some lonely locality of this region when Saint Luke proceeds with his narrative.[1] His disciples, drawing a little to one side were standing gazing upon Him as He preserved the posture which every Oriental keeps when in prayer — erect, with uplifted arms, and eyes raised Heavenward. So soon as He had made an end of praying one of them approached Him.

"Lord," he said, "teach us to pray, just as John did for his disciples."

Those who had been in the Baptist's company were numerous in these lands lying alongside the Jordan; apparently it was one of John's penitents who made this request of Jesus. A newcomer among the apostles, he had not as yet learned that prayer which the Lord gave them upon the Mount of Beatitudes; but remembering that the Forerunner had prayed with His disciples, this one longed to have Jesus do the same.

The Master granted his wish.

"When you pray," He responded, "say: Father, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, since we ourselves forgive all those that are indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

This second form of the Lord's Prayer is a precious item in our inheritance: as it is given with fewer words in Saint Luke than in Saint Matthew, it shows us that Jesus, even while prescribing certain formulas for our use, left the spirit of prayer free to soar upward unhampered. All that seemed of the highest importance in His eyes was that we should call upon God as a father, desiring, above all things, spiritual good things, and asking them for others as well as for ourselves, with charity warm at our hearts and with the spirit of forgiveness upon our lips.

Furthermore, of such vital necessity is this duty of prayer that the Master was moved to speak more at length thereof, charging them to pray without ceasing, to pray unwearyingly; for though God may seem sometimes to be deaf

1 Luke xi. 1–4.

to our cries, it is only to make us more sensible of the greatness of His gifts, to render the soul lowlier and to overpower it with loving kindnesses and tender mercies. As He was wont to do, He put these lessons before them in a figurative form.[2] Now He speaks of a father who would not give his hungry child a stone in place of bread, nor a scorpion instead of an egg, nor a serpent when he is asked for a fish; then again He tells of a poor but hospitable man who has received some wayfarer in the middle of the night; at once he hastens off to knock at the door of a neighbour's house.

"Let me have three loaves," he calls out; "for a guest has arrived at my house from off his journey, and I have nothing to offer him."

But the friend has gone to rest, his children at his side, his dwelling barred and shut for the night, and he has no mind to rise from his bed. But his neighbour standing without in the darkness will not take any refusal; he keeps on rapping, still rapping, until the other yields to his entreaties, giving him what he needs.

"And in like manner, I say to you," the Lord pursued, "ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."

It was about this same time, if not upon the very same day, that we are told of two miracles performed by Jesus. He was betaking Himself to a dwelling whose proffered hospitalities he had just accepted, when two blind men became aware of His passing; forthwith they set out to follow Him, crying out:

"Son of David, have pity upon us!" [3]

At first the Lord appeared not to hear them; publicly to accept this honourable title in Perea within the domains of Herod would have been to proclaim Himself the Messiah, and would have at once reawakened the jealousy of the tetrarch. To evade this danger He therefore sought shelter within a dwelling; but even there the unfortunate men managed to rejoin Him. Their faith moved the Saviour greatly.

"Do you believe," He said to them, "that I am able to do this for you?"

To this they replied, simply —

"Yes, Lord."

Then He touched their eyes, saying —

"Let it be done unto you according to your faith!" and upon the instant they recovered their sight, while Jesus sternly warned them "to take care and let no one know of this!" But they, listening only to the promptings of this newborn joy, spread the report throughout all that land, and thus, like so many others, only aggravated the dangers and the enmities beneath which the Master was soon to succumb.

In the Saviour's eyes it was more important to drive out the devils of passion than to heal bodily ills; for, after withstanding the blind men's demand so long, we see that He does not delay an instant to deliver a dumb man who was vexed with an evil spirit.[4] This possessed mute was brought to Him at the very moment when the two Jews were leaving the house; and, when the demon

2 Luke xi. 5-12. 3 Matt. ix. 27-31. 4 Luke xi. 14, 15; Matt. ix. 32-34.

was driven out, the man straightway began to speak. All were thrilled with wonder and awe.

"No one," cried they, "ever yet saw aught like this in Israel."

But hereabouts, too, there were Pharisees, some of whom were well informed of those calumnies which had been circulated throughout Galilee, and they repeated them to one and another of these poor people whom they knew so well how to deceive.

" 'Tis in Beelzebub's name," they whispered, "that he casts out devils."

Again Jesus withstood this slander with the fact that they themselves and their sons drove out the devil without borrowing the weapons of the fiend, and that, like earthly kingdoms, hell cannot be divided against itself on peril of its own existence.[5] And yet if they acknowledged that the power Jesus had shown over Satan came not from Beelzebub, but from Heaven, then surely the hour foretold by Isaiah [6] was here upon them, when the Kingdom of God would be established. "Who shall despoil the giant of his prey," the prophet cried; "who shall rob the strong man of his captives?" "The captives of the giant shall be reft from him," Jehovah had made answer, "and those that the mighty man hath taken shall be drawn from his clutches."

The Oracle was now fulfilled. In vain had Satan, "the strong man armed, guarded his dwelling and trusted that his peace was never more to be disturbed: a stronger than he had appeared, had stripped him of his armour, and distributed his spoils."

Under such warlike imagery did Jesus proclaim Himself the vanquisher of the devil, and announce to mankind, who by sin are become the prey and bond-servants of hell, that He had come to break the chains of slavery, bestowing upon them eternal goods.

Yet all were not to be gladdened by such deliverance, for the people so long cherished by God had at last stubbornly rejected salvation. Taking a possessed man [7] as a fitting comparison, Jesus showed the headstrong blunders of the Jews and their approaching ruin. He spoke of the Devil of Idolatry, as it came out from Israel in the time of the Babylonian Captivity, doomed to wander amid waste and waterless places, through those wrecks of time where, in the language of Isaiah, "their pleasant palaces are filled with dragons, where satyrs lead their dances, and the owls hoot to one another." [8] Not finding repose in any quarter he returns into the land of Juda, aforetime his abode, finds it chastened and purified, swept clean of its idolatries, but garnished with a righteousness that is altogether of the exterior. Whereupon, assured of new victories, he makes haste to take seven other spirits all wickeder than himself, and returning into Israel they there set up their abode, and her last state becomes worse than the first.

Did the Pharisees recognise how perfectly this image resembled themselves? There is nothing to indicate that they did; nevertheless, though the bandage still blindfolded their eyes, the people put no restraint upon their own delighted

5 Luke xi. 17–22.
6 Is. xlix. 24, 25.
7 Luke xi. 24–26.
8 Is. xiii. 21, 22.

wonderment, insomuch that one woman, as if constituting herself the mouthpiece of the multitude, cried aloud just at this moment: [9]

"Blessed the womb which bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!"

"Ay, doubtless," responded Jesus, "but blesseder still are those who hear and keep the word of God!"

By this He gave Israel of the flesh to understand that there is a blessedness more exalted than that of any earthly motherhood, albeit divine — that of conceiving Jesus Christ in the heart by the quickening warmth of faith, and bearing Him outwardly before man in the open fulfilment of His behests and good pleasure.

Meanwhile the throngs grew denser, for after the healing of the possessed certain of the Jews had demanded some more extraordinary miracle — "some sign coming from Heaven." [10] The Lord, preoccupied with refuting the Pharisees' slanderous attacks, had not as yet refused their request, and so there were still some hopes lingering among them that they were soon to see a new and startling prodigy. Turning toward the men who had excited these vain expectations, Jesus dealt with them as with "an accursed and adulterous [11] race," and answered them "that there should no sign be given them save only that of Jonas Prophet."

This was a well deserved rebuke, for it was but one more insult to the Christ that they were still unsatisfied with the marvels which He was forever multiplying on every hand. In order to convince these hardened hearts it would indeed require the voice of Jehovah Himself, sounding from the heavenly heights, to confirm the miracles of Jesus as being divine. What wonder, then, that the Lord left these incredulous men no hope of any sign other than that one He had destined for the whole world — His Resurrection, which long since had been prefigured in Jonas. After three days, passed in the depths of the sea, the prophet had emerged thence bearing salvation to Niniveh: so, too, the Christ would rest three days and three nights in the earth's dark bosom, and from thence arise all glorious. But this sign, though so wondrous as to convert whole Gentile nations, would leave the Jews alone in their blindness. This Jesus now foretold to them, and thus beforehand bewailed their reprobation.

"The men of Niniveh," said the Lord, "shall rise against this race and shall condemn it, for they did penance at the preaching of Jonas, and one greater than Jonas is here. The Queen of the South shall rise in judgment against this race, and she shall condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is here one greater than Solomon." [12]

II. Jesus and the Pharisees

Luke xi. 37–54; xii. 1–59

Toward the middle of the day, the hour in which the Jews take their first meal, a Pharisee approached the Master, praying Him to eat with him at his

9 Luke xi. 27, 28.
10 Luke xi. 16.
11 Matt. xii. 39.
12 Luke xi. 31–32; Matt. xii. 41, 42.

house.[13] Jesus accepted the invitation. Round about the threshold of the dining-hall a considerable company awaited His coming, composed exclusively of Pharisees and scribes; for it would seem that, as the apostles were not bidden, the Master found Himself alone in the midst of these doctors, who were as vain of their own learning as they were envious of His glory. One and all, scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers, went through with their ablutions in the entrance-way, and doubtless in this instance with an even greater affectation of zeal than usual. Walking straight past them without stopping to imitate their ceremonies, Jesus went immediately to the table and took his place upon one of the couches.

Such disdain for their prescriptions pricked the vanity of these fanatics. Soon Jesus saw the eyes of his host were fixed sternly upon him.

"Why," the sectary was muttering, "why did not this man wash along with the rest?" These complaints were at once echoed by the guests, and soon degenerated into such violent expressions that the Lord was constrained to check the rising tumult.

He began by telling His enemies that though they were scrupulous in purifying the outside of the cup they left the inside full of ravening and corruption: that they neglected the duties of charity, the love of God and the neighbour, in order to cover over their hard-heartedness and conceit with a mask of religion. Then, giving fuller utterance to His indignation, He launched that threefold anathema upon them —

"Woe to you, Pharisees, because you pay tithes on mint, on rue, and on every herb, but put aside justice and the love of God! These things it behoved you to do, and not to leave the others undone.

"Woe to you, Pharisees, because you love the first seats in the synagogues and salutations in public places!

"Woe unto you because you are like hidden sepulchres, and men that walk over them know it not!"

The Pharisees quivered with fury under this censure. Seated near Him was one of the scribes, who was moved to respond: [14]

"Master, in speaking thus, you cast opprobrium upon us as well."

Jesus turned and looked at him.

"Woe to you also," He said, "Doctors of the Law, because you load men down with intolerable burdens, and you yourselves do not so much as touch them with the tips of your fingers!"

They were as much guilty as the Pharisees, since, like them, their only aim was to impose upon the people; they reared mighty monuments in honour of the prophets immolated by their fathers, and now here they were at heart become accomplices in those very crimes, by wishing that a like fate would befall the Saviour, the Son of God! Finally, they had appropriated to themselves the key of knowledge, not to open a free passage for the people, but to hinder and forbid any one's entering therein. In their eyes it appeared that the Christ was about to open the book which they had heretofore obstinately held shut — whose every page bore their own conviction inscribed by the fingers of divine

13 Luke xi. 37. 14 Luke xi. 45–52.

wisdom: "I will send them, prophets and apostles, and they shall kill some and persecute others, that the blood of all the prophets and apostles which has been shed since the foundation of the world may be required of this race, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachary, who was slain between the Temple and the Altar. Yea, I say unto you it shall be required of this race."

After this fearful menace Jesus rose to depart.[15] Immediately the company jumped to their feet; scribes and Pharisees pressed about Him, and well-nigh deafened Him with a volley of questions, with the hope of surprising Him in some expressions out of which they might construct a legal accusation. According to Saint Luke's metaphor it was a fierce, breathless chase, the maddened pack dashing upon their prey and flinging themselves upon Him, bent upon bringing Him to the earth. But the common people had not abandoned the divine Master, and they were now at the doors "ranged in such serried masses that they trod upon one another." [16] All that had occurred within the hall passed swiftly from mouth to mouth; the excitement evidenced by the crowds made the Pharisees not so loath to part with their guest; and so again this time they let Him go unscathed.

Hardly had He left their presence, when He began to forewarn His disciples against the hypocrisy of the men who had attacked Him. At last the time had come to publish abroad, "in the daylight and on the housetops, that which hitherto He had confided to private ears and in the darkness."

"I say to you," He cried aloud, "to you who are My friends: Have no fear of them who can kill the body, but whose power goes no further than that. I will show you whom you must fear: Fear him who, after he hath brought death upon you, hath power to bring you down to Gehenna; yea, I say to you, fear him." And He exhorted them to confess Him without fear, even when hotly pursued by these same doctors. They should be dragged into the synagogues, before magistrates, and all powers of earth; yet they need put themselves to no pains as to how they should reply, for God's Holy Spirit "would teach them in that same hour what they ought to say."

The people were listening with speechless interest, when from the midst of the multitudes came the voice of a Jew, calling upon the Lord.[17] Struck by the commanding power of the Christ, he conceived it was a most auspicious opportunity to terminate a family quarrel by turning it to his own advantage.

"Master," he called out, "order my brother to give me a share in his inheritance."

Jesus rebuked this fellow, who looked only to gain his own selfish profits from the coming of the Messiah's reign.

"Man," He said, "who has constituted Me to be your judge and to appoint shares for you?"

Such wretched cares were indeed unworthy of Him, for He was come into this world to teach us that "life does not consist in that which a man possesses. He was moved to explain His thought more fully by means of a parable:

"There was a wealthy man, whose fields yielded rich harvests. And he

15 Luke xi. 53, 54. 16 Luke xii. 1–12. 17 Luke xii. 13–21.

thought within himself, saying: 'What shall I do? I have no room wherein I can store my crops.' And he said: 'Ah! here is what I will do! I will tear down my barns, and I will build greater, and thither I will gather all my crops and all my goods. And I will say: My soul, thou hast great store of goods for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and have good cheer.' But God said to him: 'Foolish man! this night shall thy soul be required of thee; and whose shall be that great wealth which thou hast acquired?' "

It was easy to read beneath this imagery another lesson anent the vanity of riches: still Jesus knew that His hearers were so blinded by their love of earthly goods that He dwelt longer upon this subject.[18] Pointing up to the fast-flying crows hovering over their heads, and to the meadow lilies under their feet, God's creatures which leave the care of food and raiment all in His hands, He bade them not to let themselves be harassed and, as it were, tossed about [19] by the troubles of life:

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a Kingdom. Sell all that you have and give alms. Make yourselves purses which wear not out with time, a treasure which faileth not in the heavens; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

As we see, the Lord was repeating to the Jews of Perea the same lessons formerly given the Galileans; but now, as the time grew shorter, He added still more impressive counsels — for His mission was fast drawing to its close.[20] He wished them to be ever vigilant, with loins upgirt, with lamps burning in their hands, like waiting-men who stand watching for their master.

"I am come to kindle a fire upon the earth," He said, "and what will I but that it blaze forth right quickly? I have a Baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"

Thus, together with that immense longing to save the world, there was an accompanying host of sad forebodings; for the Christ knew what wild storms were gathering against His work and how, in a few short months, faith in His Name would be the occasion for bitter persecutions.

"Think you," said He, "that I am come to bring peace to earth? No, I tell you, rather the sword and separation. Henceforth, if there be five persons in one house, they shall be divided, three against two, and two against three; the father against the son and the son against his father, the mother against the daughter and the daughter against her mother."

Yet the multitude listened to these words without comprehending them, without any inkling of the great struggles which Jesus was foretelling, and how close at hand was the redemption of mankind. With something almost like bitterness, He reproached them for their apathy.[21] Why, since they were so clever at guessing by the cloud-rack on the western horizon, or by noting the southerly breezes, whether the day was likely to be showery or warm — why could they not discern the drift of the times wherein they now were? Very soon it would be too late; the acceptable hour of salvation once slipped by, the

18 Luke xii. 22–34.
19 Luke xii. 29.
20 Luke xii. 35–53.
21 Luke xii. 54–59.

Lord would become a rigorous creditor, who would deliver them over to the judge; and the judge would cast them into the dungeon, from hence none goeth forth till after he has paid all unto the very last farthing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION

Luke xiii. 1–35; John x. 22–42

While Jesus was thus telling the good tidings to the land of Perea a rumour passed from mouth to mouth that another bloody insurrection had purpled the streets of Jerusalem.[1] Certain of the Galileans had striven to shake off the yoke of Rome; but surprised by Pilate's soldiery just in the act of offering sacrifice, the revolutionists all fell in front of the great Altar, mingling their blood with that of the victims. To Jewish eyes it seemed that so baleful an event could but be regarded as permitted by God in atonement for some heinous crime; for it was a deep-rooted feeling with them that that man is most grievously afflicted who is guiltiest in the sight of God. Anxious to know what awful sins had drawn down such punishment upon the conspirators, some of the disciples hastened to give an account of this massacre to the Christ.

Jesus knew their thoughts. "Do you believe," He replied,[2] "that these Galileans were the greatest sinners among their countrymen because they have suffered such things? Nay, I tell you."

Then He recalled how, not long since, at Siloë, a tower had crashed down upon some eighteen persons; and here again He denied that any man of them was more blameworthy in God's sight than the other citizens of Jerusalem. To estimate the wrong-doing of these poor victims by the horror of such accidents is to forget that our present life is a season of trial, in which misfortune does not always visit us as a chastisement for our crimes. And yet what seems like a meaningless jumble of human events does indeed but conceal a marvellous order, a plan full of unfathomable wisdom and goodness, a design which as yet remains the secret of God. Jesus made His disciples refrain from all efforts to sound the depths of God's mysteries, urging them rather to turn their gaze inward upon themselves, and thus mould and fashion their wills to that of the divine justice, while still there was time. Then, the better to convince their minds, He made use of a parable:[3]

"There was a man who had a figtree planted in his vineyard; thither he came looking for fruit and found none. Then he said to the vine dresser: 'For three years I have come looking for fruit from this figtree, and I find none. Cut it down; why does it still cumber the ground?' The vine dresser answered: 'Lord, let it alone for this one more year, until I dig about it and dung it. Then if it bear fruit, it shall be kept; if not, you shall cut it down?'"

In the person of this vintager Jesus represented Himself pleading for Judea,

1 Luke xiii. 1–5. 2 Luke xiii. 2–5. 3 Luke xiii. 6–9.

His cherished vineyard, most of all for Jerusalem, which rose up in the midst like a barren figtree. For three years had the heavenly Father sought fruit from off its branches, but without avail; at length with His death so near at hand all that Jesus could do was to obtain from God one last year of patience, that year which was to extend from the Passion up to the destruction of Jerusalem. Oh that Israel would but harken to this final, mighty appeal! Would indeed that she might bring forth the flower and the fruit so long and patiently expected!

In Perea, at least, these earnest words of the Lord continued to meet with a favourable reception, and the synagogues, though elsewhere shut against Him, were here thrown open to welcome Him. About this time, in fact, we find Him teaching in one of them on a Sabbath day, as He used formerly to do in Galilee.[4] "And here, behold a woman coming to him, who had had a spirit of infirmity for now eighteen years, all bent over and not able so much as to look upwards." The devil which had possession of her had not only enfeebled her body, but had weighed her heart earthward, and while he robbed her of the sight of her Saviour, he likewise blotted out all thought of calling upon Him for help. Touched by so great misery Jesus called her to Him.

"Woman," He said to her, "you are cured of your infirmity"; and at the same time He laid His hands upon her.

Straightening up until she stood erect once more, she broke forth glorifying God; but the ruler of the synagogue could not brook this spectacle of Jesus receiving homage from his congregation; angered alike by the prodigy and the joyous chorus of acclamations, he gave utterance to impatient words.

"During six days," he cried, "man may labour; within that time come here to be healed, and not upon the Sabbath day."

Then Jesus replied: "Hypocrites! does not each of you loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water on the Sabbath day? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has held fast bound for eighteen years, be loosed from these fetters upon the Sabbath day?" This argument confounded the Master's adversaries, and the people rejoiced for all the things that were gloriously done by Him.

Thus, then, the mission of Jesus on the other side of Jordan had not been altogether fruitless, for men's hearts were turning toward the new reign of the Christ; yet along with this throbbing expectation there were mingled feelings of vague uneasiness. What signified those words of His, when He said that He would come like a thief in the night, or like the master who appears of a sudden to surprise his drowsy household? [5] Why must they all be watching night and day with girded loins, torch in hand? Would the season for entering the Kingdom of Heaven be so swiftly fleeting that it behoved one to lay hold upon it in all haste, for the acceptable time once sped by never more would return? Thoughts like these disquieted their minds, till at last some of the Jews broached the subject to Jesus.

"Lord," they asked, "shall there be only a few saved?" [6]

4 Luke xiii. 10–17. 5 Luke xii. 36–39. 6 Luke xiii. 23.

The Master was at no pains to ease the burden of their fears. He knew well the obstinate self-confidence of these sons of Israel, so ready to believe themselves perfect, if only from the simple fact that they were God's people. Therefore He told them again of the narrow gateway whereby His Church is entered, which is opened only by the expenditure of efforts whereof very many are incapable.[7] Then how would it profit them at the last moment to have heard and seen the Messiah, when the soul that has not entered His Kingdom before death will find the door closed and the Father of the family retired within doors?

"When you, standing outside," continued Jesus, "shall begin to knock, crying out: 'Lord, open to us!' and He shall answer you: 'I know not whence you are,' then you shall begin to say: 'We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our public squares.' And He shall say to you: 'I know not whence you are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.' There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you shall see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and they shall have their share in the banquet."

They were now upon the highroad, leading to the Holy City, when Jesus prophesied to the Jews that, though first to be called to the heavenly Kingdom, they should be the last to find the way thither.[8] That he purposed going up to Jerusalem for the anniversary festival of the Dedication had come to be known to all, and the Pharisees of Perea were much rejoiced thereat. In their impatience to witness His departure they pretended to fear some outbreak of wrath from Herod, and so pressed Him to fly the country.

"Leave these parts," they urged; "get away from here, for Herod has a mind to kill you." [9]

These threatening words had little effect upon the Lord. He informed His enemies that nothing would hinder His fulfilling His mission to the very end, and this He would do by proceeding onward toward the frontiers of Judea, not through any fear of Herod, but in obedience to the mandates of Heaven, which were now beckoning Him on Jerusalemwards. Then, branding the wretched policy of that prince whose name they had invoked, He responded to the Pharisees:

"Go and say to that fox that I shall cast out devils and heal the sick today and tomorrow, and on the third day I shall have finished; nevertheless, today and tomorrow and the day following I must walk, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

And so at the time appointed the Saviour quitted the realm of Herod, passed over the Jordan, and wended His way through the rocky defiles which lead up to the Holy City. Doubtless it was just as He was about to enter within her walls and at sight of the multitudes grouped around her gates, that the heart of Jesus was torn with grief and He wept over the ungrateful city, foretelling that she would see Him only once again, that so she might welcome Him with a first outburst of gladness, and straightway thereafter put Him to death.

7 Luke xiii. 24–30. 8 Luke xiii. 22. 9 Luke xiii. 31–33.

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" He cried, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the hen doth her brood under her wings! And lo! your houses shall be deserted, for I say to you: You shall not see Me until you shall say, 'Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord!' " [10]

This sad foreknowledge did not prevent Jesus from entering the streets of Jerusalem, there to proffer her His gift of salvation for the last time.[11] Just now the town was given over to joyous celebrations, for the Feast of the Dedication was no less brilliant than were those of the Tabernacles or the Passover. For the space of one week the Jews, with palm branches in their hands, surged in crowds through the Temple, with sacred songs commemorating the purification of the sanctuary by the Machabees, while every evening the town was ablaze with lights, in memory of that single flask of oil which for eight days had sufficed for the needs of the divine service.

Leaving His disciples to take part in the feast-making, Jesus withdrew further into the Temple, till He came to Solomon's Portico. This gallery bordered Kedron Ravine, and during the sharper spells of winter furnished a walk which was exposed to the warm rays of the sun. There some of the Sanhedrin's people caught sight of Jesus, and made haste to gather round Him.

"Until when," they said, "do you mean to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, say so openly."

Jesus avoided the snare they were now laying for Him. To proclaim Himself the Messiah would be to furnish them with an occasion for handing Him over to the Roman authorities. He was content to recall what He had told them as to His mission, and by what wondrous deeds He had given proof thereof.[12] Then, repeating the parable He had given them at the Feast of the Tabernacles, He assured them anew "that He was their shepherd, that if they were willing to be His sheep, following Him and hearkening to His voice, having Him for their safeguard and their watchman, they might rest in sweet security, for the Father had communicated unto Him His attributes, that divine power which is above all things whatsoever; yet no one is able to wrest aught from the hand of the Father." And then He added: "My Father and I are but One."

The essential vigour of these mighty words would alone have made their meaning clearly manifest. By them Jesus declared Himself their God — not simply united to the Father by faith and love, but having only the one same substance with Him. And it was in this sense the Jews understood His words, for they snatched up stones, thinking to stone Him.[13] With a word Jesus quelled their madness.

"I have done in your presence," He said to them, "many good works from My Father; for which one are you now about to stone Me?"

" 'Tis not for any good work that we intend to stone you," they made answer, "but for blasphemy, and because, being a man, you make yourself God."

10 Luke xiii. 34, 35.
11 John x. 22.
12 John x. 25–80.
13 John x. 31–33.

And the Lord was moved to pity by their blindness; He showed them how, in the Holy Books, Jehovah had Himself announced and foreshadowed this mystery which was so abhorrent to their minds. Not content with having appeared to their fathers under a human form, to prove that He did not deem our flesh unworthy to be united with His divinity, He had even bestowed his incommunicable Name upon the judges of Israel. "You are the gods of earth," He had said; "you are all sons of the most high." [14] Since the voice of infallibility, and the words of Scripture, which can never perish, had both attributed this title to mere creatures, how durst these enemies of the Christ accuse Him of blasphemy for that He said: "I am the Son of God?"

Nor did Jesus confine Himself to reducing them to silence by this personal argument; He proceeded to fortify His position by means of those marvels which the Father had worked by Him, in order to evidence that He was with Him and in Him, and so concluded by disclosing His Divinity more plainly than ever before.[15]

"My Father is in Me," He said, "and I in My Father."

Upon these words the Sanhedrin rushed upon Him to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hands and went forth into the Temple.

Once again He had made it appear that the princes of Judea were obstinately determined to reject His proffered gifts; and thereupon He quitted Jerusalem and returned to the other side of Jordan, into the land of Perea which had aforetime given Him kindly welcome. Henceforth it was to be the only part of Israel where the incarnate truth might find patient listeners; indeed, it would appear that this region remained faithful unto the end, for scarcely had Jesus revisited the places where John had baptised when the country people flocked about Him again.

"John did not do any miracle," they said, "but everything that John said of this man was true. And many believed in Jesus."

CHAPTER IX

JESUS' LAST SOJOURN IN PEREA

I. The Man with Dropsy, and the Second Banquet with the Pharisees

Luke xiv. 1–35

Just about this time one of the foremost Pharisees of Perea gave a great dinner to certain of his friends, and, in accordance with Jewish customs, chose a Sabbath day [1] for this social gathering. After He had been invited to the festivities Jesus found that He was again hemmed about by a circle of hostile guests. From the outset they watched His bearing with malignant inquisitiveness, for they had all noted the fact that in the crowd of onlookers stood a man afflicted

14 John x. 34–36. 15 John x. 37–39. 1 Luke xiv. 1–6.

with dropsy, upon whom the Lord had fixed His compassionate gaze. The poor invalid, intimidated by the presence of all these doctors, dared not so much as ask to be cured.

"Would Jesus venture to take the initiative and violate the Sabbath before their eyes?"

Reading aright the evil workings of their minds, the Saviour unmasked them.

"Is it lawful," He demanded, brusquely, "to heal on a Sabbath day?"

Divided between the prejudices of their sect and the fear of appearing devoid of pity, the Pharisees looked at one another and found no one ready to reply. Their silence left the Saviour full liberty of action. "Taking the sick man, He healed him and sent him away." Then, addressing the Pharisees, He declared (as once before, in the case of the crippled woman) that He was justified by their own conduct. For, in fact, there was no one among them who, if he saw his ass or his ox fall into a pit on a Sabbath day would not draw the creature out. So, then, if they spared neither trouble nor labour for a poor beast, what reason could they possibly allege for teaching that to heal their fellow man was a violation of the sacred rest? The argument did not admit of any reply; neither the scribes nor the Pharisees broke the silence, but, as if to conceal their vexation, with great bustle and confusion betook themselves to the festal board.

Following the fashion of the times, the table was ranged in the central space and surrounded by couches which accommodated at least three persons at a time; on each the place of honour was in the middle, and the guests rushed eagerly to secure this position. Jesus could not witness such puerile vanity displayed by these doctors of the law without showing them to what humiliations they laid themselves liable. Should any important personage enter during the feast some one must needs step down and give him place, to his own great mortification. Wiser by far is the humble man, who can only be bidden to go up higher than the low station which he has chosen for himself; for on earth, as in Heaven, "he who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Meanwhile the repast was being set out — the object of longing glances from the poor folk who were crowding about the portals of the hall, or passing back and forth at a respectful distance from the diners; there was every sort [2] of human wretchedness collected there — cripples in rags, maimed men, blind beggars, all attracted thither by the sounds of feasting, or perhaps by the hope that the Master would somehow lighten their load of misery.

Jesus called His host's attention to this sorrowful throng, telling him that he would have done better had he bidden these unfortunates to his feast rather than his friends, his brethren, his kindred, and his wealthy neighbours. Truly, the latter would invite him in their turn; but, however sumptuous their entertainments might be, they could never afford him that which God has given into the hands of the poor, to be a recompense unto their benefactors — the gladness of the heavenly banqueting.

To the scribes there was nothing that savoured more of intolerable assurance

2 Luke xiv. 12–14.

than such statements as this — that these miserable people, whom they disdained, should ever acquire any preeminence or any power of bestowing eternal benefits.

Now one of these scholars, interrupting the Christ, asserted that in the coming kingdom of the Messiah his place had been marked out for him beforehand, and he loudly congratulated himself on that account: [3]

"Happy man, who shall sit at the banquet in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Jesus replied to this boast by describing the heavenly festival by means of a comparison.

"A certain man," He began, "made a great feast and invited a good company; at the hour for dining he sent out a servant to apprise those who were bidden that they should come, for now everything was ready; but they all with one consent began to excuse themselves. The first said to him:

" 'I have bought a parcel of ground, I must needs go out and see it; I beg that you will have me excused.'

" 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and am just about going to try them,' another said; 'I beg that you will have me excused.'

" 'I have taken a wife,' said another 'and therefore I cannot come.'

"But when the servant returned he gave this report to his master. Then the goodman of the household, being wroth, said to his servant:

" 'Go into the squares and to the street corners and bring hither the poor and maimed, without delay.'

" 'Lord, it has been done as you ordered,' the servant said, 'and yet there is room.'

"Then the master said to the servant:

" 'Go out into the highways and alongside the hedges; and compel them to enter here, in order that my house may be filled.' "

In this parable there was nothing lacking for the feast that could be laid to the master's door; the table was decked with all magnificence, the guests were a goodly company. Not content with the mere formal invitation, but faithfully following the cordial custom of eastern countries, he had despatched his servant to acquaint them of the hour when the banquet was ready to be set forth. So. for now three years, the princes of the house of Israel had likewise heard the pleading accents of the divine Master, but, one and all, they had still refused to listen to Him. The wrath of their heavenly Father was kindled at such contemptuous tokens; and therefore, disowning these great folks of Judea, He had commanded that the poor and the cripples, the blind and the maimed to be brought unto Him.

Round about the very board at which He uttered this parable, Jesus could point to these outcasts of Israel, who were eagerly hastening to hear His voice and to take their place at the celestial banquet. Nor would they be the only ones to find their way thither; for the master, seeing there were still empty spaces, gives orders to his servants to go outside the town, and bring any strangers into his house. By these words Jesus proclaimed the calling of the Gen-

[3] Luke xiv. 15-24.

tiles. And though these Pharisees, so puffed up with their earthly ancestry, did not comprehend Him fully, they at least could not fail to know that the Saviour had disinherited them; for, putting aside all obscurities, He declared to these guests seated around Him "that not one of those men who were invited should taste of His banquet."

This sentence is the last which Saint Luke reports as spoken at this meal.[4] Immediately afterwards he tells how Jesus departed from the festal hall, followed by great throngs, while doubtless the poor and infirm were with Him, drawn to His side by the promises which they had just heard from His lips. But to their simple minds, the new rule of the Messiah, His throne and His feast-making could not but resemble those for which the world is so greedy. Jesus undeceived them; turning toward them He warned them that, in desiring to be His disciples they were aspiring to a life of sacrifice. They must needs set His love high above all things else, must forego their own tenderest ties of affection as soon as ever they should become an obstacle to salvation, breaking with all things else, hating all things else, "father, mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, everything — even their own soul."

"Mad, indeed, is that man who would begin to build a tower without having wherewithal to complete it! The king who would engage his scanty armament in war with a formidable foe would be a madman indeed! The discomfiture of each would be equally certain. So is it with the man who desires to be the disciple of Jesus without renouncing all that he possesses." Very soon he shall become but a traitor and an apostate. Thereupon the Lord concluded with those words which, in His preaching, always denoted that the lesson just uttered contains a truth of paramount importance:

"They that have ears to hear let them hear!"

II. The Parables upon Divine Mercy

Luke xv. 1–32

During these last days the Christ had given to the precepts of Christian abnegation a severer form, while at the same time He spoke more openly than ever before of the tender mercies of His Father. Whther it was that He felt moved to display a greater sympathy for sorrowful mortals the longer He Himself suffered our infirmities, or whether, seeing His end draw on apace, He was the more eager to hurry the strayed sheep within His fold — at this period His words did indeed breathe an ineffable tenderness, His sighs and His tears were oftener wrung from Him,[5] and the words of His Parables grow always more heart-stirring. Those whereby the Master expressed the depth and breadth of divine love deserve to be distinguished from among all the rest.

He proffered them as an answer to fresh mutterings from the scribes; for these sectaries, after their humiliation at the Pharisee's table, were become in Perea, as much as elsewhere, His implacable enemies; and they now reproached the Christ for associating with none but the vilest sinners.

4 Luke xiv. 25-35.

5 Mark vii. 34; viii. 12; Luke ix. 41; John xi. 33, 35.

"Why! in sooth, one would think all the publicans in the country were like to gather around him!"

With a gesture, pointing to the attentive throngs, Jesus replied to the grumblers who were so blind as to make small account of that priceless array of souls: [6]

"What man is there among you," He said, "who, though he has a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them does not leave the ninety and nine others in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he find it? And, after he finds it, he lays it over his shoulder with gladness, and coming to his home, calls together friends and neighbours, saying:

" 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.'

"Even so, I tell you, there shall be more of joy in Heaven over one sinner who does penance, than over ninety-nine just men who need not penance. Or again, what woman is there, who, if she has ten drachmas and she lose one of them, does not light the lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she find it? And after she has found it she calls her friends and neighbours together, saying:

" 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma which I had lost.'

"So I tell you that there shall be joy in the sight of God's Angels over one sinner doing penance."

Evidently these first gracious similitudes scarcely touched the Pharisees, for Jesus proceeded to exalt further the divine loving-kindness. This he did in one of His most beautiful parables — reciting the sad misconduct of a spendthrift younger son,[7] who had extorted from his father his own share of the inheritance. Never did the Lord picture the sinner's wanderings with vivider colours; every touch in the likeness stirs the soul, and brings back the features of our own life story before our eyes. For what man of us is there who has lived in this world without knowing, without seeing all round him, those very illusions which befooled this prodigal boy — that thirst for an unbridled and unhampered liberty which devoured him? Who has not felt himself to be within a vain, strange land, where he is living an existence altogether without God? First comes that passing intoxication of freedom, and then the awful anguish which clutches his awakening soul, as he lies, sick at heart, with an infinite yearning void within him which his passions are powerless to satisfy, and with the bitter sense of his enthralment in the companionship of a filthy herd. Happy is the man who amid this heart-heaviness lifts his eyes heavenward, rises up, and returns unto his God! Thrice happy is that soul, which, when overwhelmed with the realisation of its sins, remembers the forgiveness whereof Jesus held forth such marvellous tokens!

"While the ruined spendthrift is still afar off, his father sees him; he is filled with pitifulness for his boy, makes haste toward him, falls upon his neck, and kisses him. And the son says to him:

" 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you. I am not worthy to be called your son.'

6 Luke xv. 1–10. 7 Luke xv. 11–32.

"But the father says to his servants: 'Bring forth quickly the richest robe and put it on him, and place a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it: let us eat and make good cheer! For this son of mine was dead and is brought to life again; he was lost and is found.'"

The listening throngs were stirred and thrilled by this narrative, even as, since that day, so many repentant souls have recognised its comfortable power. For a short space the Master left them to revolve His words silently in their hearts, but at length, looking upon the surly group of His enemies, still standing along with the people, He added a word or two for them:

"The elder son of the family was on his way home from the fields just as the merrymaking began; his ears caught the loud quiring of musicians, the dancers' light laughter.

"'What might all this mean?' he asked himself; and learning that his brother had returned, he grew indignant and refused to enter the house. Then the father came out to him, and began to entreat him. But he, making answer, said:

"'See how many years I have served you and never neglected one of your commandments, yet never have you given me a kid to make merry with my friends. Yet as soon as this other son returns, who has squandered his portion with harlots, you kill the fatted calf for him.'

"And the father said: 'My son, you are always with me, and everything that is mine is yours. But it was fitting that we should make high festival and rejoice, because your brother was dead and is come to life once more; he was lost and is found again.'"

So the thin veil which enveloped the parable had become quite transparent. This discontented son was the Jewish people, her doctors especially, so boastful of the fact that they were the firstborn of Jehovah, and destined to inherit everything which is His on earth — The Temple, the Law, His Holy Word. Did these sectaries, eaten up with their own self-importance, recognise the likeness in this portrait? did they at all comprehend that Jesus valued tears of penitence far above any hypocritical righteousness? that he was bidding all sinful men repent, and thereby opened wide to them the celestial banquet and the Kingdom of God? The Pharisees' sullen and obstinate blindness hardly admits of our hazarding any such conjecture; but though the parable of the prodigal lad seemed only another stumbling block to them, it has since saved numberless sinners from despair, for it assures them that the loving kindness of their heavenly Father is unbounded, free, and knows no end.

III. The Unfaithful Steward — The Wicked Rich Man

Luke xvi. 1–31; xvii. 1–10

Just about this time Jesus gave the Pharisees further cause for bitter dislike of Him. We know how boundless was their love of wealth; only desirous of temporal blessings they asked for nothing beyond "the dews of heaven and the

fatness of earth"; [8] but though this abundance, of old promised to the Synagogue, had ever been and as yet remained their portion such was not to be the case in the new realm of Jesus. Wealth was something to be dreaded — so said the Master; for He knew that it spreads an invisible net round about the soul, immeshing it and dragging it to the earth. Therefore He never let pass any occasion for denouncing it to His disciples as an enemy and a deceiver. The cunning stratagem of a dishonest agent, which had been brought to light, doubtless, just at this time and in this very region which the Saviour was now traversing, furnished Him with an opportunity for renewing His warnings.

"There was a rich man," He began,[9] "who had a steward, and the man was accused before him of having wasted his goods. He called him, and said to him:

" 'What is this I hear them say of you. Render an account of your administration, for hereafter you shall no longer manage for me.'

"The steward mused within himself: 'What shall I do, since my master will take the administration of his property away from me? I have not the strength to labour on the earth, and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I will do, so that when I shall be removed from my trust, there may be some who will receive me into their houses.'

"Accordingly, having called each one of his master's debtors, he said to the first:

" 'How much do you owe my master?'

" 'A hundred barrels of oil,' he answered.

" 'Take back your bond,' the steward told him; 'sit down at once and write "Fifty." '

"Thereupon he said to another —

" 'And how much do you owe?'

" 'A hundred measures of wheat,' he said.

" 'Take back your bill,' was the reply, 'and write "Eighty." '

"And his master praised his unfaithful servant for that he had dealt prudently."

That Jesus held up this fellow's rascality for His disciples' consideration was not because He approved of trickery and craftiness, but because He wished to remind them "how much more watchful and wary, in compassing their schemes, are the children of this world than are the children of light!"

"And do you likewise," He told them, "make friends for yourselves of these riches of inquity, so that when you shall happen to be in need they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles."

The hardihood with which Jesus proffered His followers this striking illustration has astonished the world, yet it reveals at the same time that contempt with which the Saviour regarded man's craving for money. In His eyes riches appear, as it were, altogether stripped of any value, except that of being emptied, into the outstretched hands of the poor and thereby commuted into everlasting

8 Gen. xxvii. 28. 9 Luke xvi. 1-9.

treasures. Here, as on many other occasions, Jesus is giving His own a suggestion, more than He is laying down a law. By treating wealth as iniquitous [10] He does not deny that riches can be legitimately acquired and retained; but He judges of riches as they oftenest show themselves, taking their rise in greedy unjustice and unfairness, displaying their effects in sullen haughtiness, hardheartedness, and intemperate conduct; and because He finds wealth living in such fellowship as this, He brands it for what it is. Nor is He content with lending all the majesty of His speech to this stern reprobation; He wishes to make those who love Him share in His aversion for the perishable dross of earth. The first step taken by the Christians of Jerusalem was to have one common purse, just as they had but a single heart,[11] and, down to this day, one of the first promptings which springs up in holy souls is the longing to devote themselves to Jesus by vows of perpetual poverty.

Yet, although the Lord's principal object was to show that great wealth is foreign to the true life of man, He was careful not to leave any false impression upon the minds of the disciples — explaining to them that they are to imitate the prudence, and not the dishonesty of the faithless steward, and that they should prove by their steadfast integrity "in little things, whether they are worthy of great." He concluded by repeating His customary maxims concerning the love of terrestrial possessions:

"No man can serve two masters at one and the same time. You cannot serve God and Mammon."

It was to the disciples He addressed these words; but the avaricious Pharisees who stood among the listeners laughed them to scorn. As usual, Jesus quietly brushed aside the insult.[12]

"God knows your hearts," He told them, "for that which is great among men is an abomination before Him."

And He showed how this abomination was plain to be seen in the disdain which they evinced for the Law given to man, from Moses down to John Baptist, whereof the reign of the Messiah was but the fulfilment and perfection. Yet what else were the Pharisees doing but violating that same Law by tolerating the adultery which it prohibited? Without mentioning their tetrarch by name Jesus made an evident allusion to his crime, and proceeded to scourge the grovelling timidity of these doctors who had sanctioned the evil by their silence.[13] Then reverting to His contempt of riches which had first shocked them, He dwelt still more forcibly upon the dangers besetting earthly goods.

"There was once a rich man," He said,[14] "who went all robed in purple and linen, and every day took his pleasure in great and gorgeous state. And there was a beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate covered with sores. He would have been well pleased to have cloyed his hunger with the scraps which fell from the rich man's table, and no one gave him anything, but the dogs came and licked his sores. Now it came time for the beggar to die, and he was borne by the angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man died also, and was

10 Luke xvi. 11.
11 Acts iv. 32.
12 Luke xvi. 15.
13 Luke xvi. 18.
14 Luke xvi. 19–32.

buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, as he was in torments, he saw afar off Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom.

" 'Father Abraham,' he cried, 'have pity upon me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame!'

" 'My son,' Abraham answered him, 'remember that thou didst receive thy goods during thy life, while Lazarus hath had evil things for his portion; therefore it is that he is comforted and thou art in anguish. Ay, and moreover, there is a great chaos forever fixed between you and us; they that would pass from hence to you, or from thence hither, may not so do."

What could the rich man do except plead his ignorance, and so make shift to cast the blame of his wretchedness upon God? Howbeit, Jesus would not even allow him this excuse, and thus continued the dialogue across the impassable gulf:

" 'Father,' said the damned, 'I adjure you, send Lazarus to my father's house — for I have five brothers. He will testify to them of these things for fear lest they themselves should come into this place of torments.'

"But Abraham replied: 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

" 'Nay, Father Abraham,' answered the wicked rich man, 'but if some one from the bosom of the dead go and seek them they will do penance.'

" 'Nay! if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, even though one rise again from the dead, they will not believe Him.' "

In this manner Jesus designated those numberless Jews who, even after the Resurrection, would persist in their obstinate incredulity. But though by their scoffs and jeers the Pharisees of Perea justified this prediction, the multitude showed themselves much more teachable, and to them the Lord repeated the lessons He had once given the Galileans — warning them of scandals, urging forgiveness of injuries, and telling them of the all-powerfulness of faith.[15] Saint Luke but barely alludes to these various instructions; one of them, however, he records more at length.

"Which of you," said Jesus,[16] "having a servant in the ploughlands, or keeping the cattle, will say to him when he comes in from the field: 'Go straightway and sit down to table!' and does not say, on the contrary, 'Make ready my supper; gird thyself, and serve me until I have eaten and drunken, after which thou shalt eat and drink.' Is he under any obligation to this servant for having done that which he was commanded to do? Nay, I think not. So you also, when you shall have done all things which are commanded you, say: 'We are useless servants; we have done that which we ought to do.' "

This parable is an inestimable treasure which merits a foremost place in our memory, for it denotes that at a time when Jesus was exalting the poor of his realm, when He invited them to His table, bidding his angels transform their death into victory, He, nevertheless, took care not to flatter any man, of whatsoever rank or condition he might be. One and all were reminded that the master husbandman has given to each a task at the tillage — some in this near place,

15 Luke xvii. 1–6. 16 Luke xvii. 7–10.

some further afield, and on the day when the plough handle slips from their weary grasp, and the sickle falls from the listless fingers, they must not pretend to any credit beyond "having done what they ought," nor claim the right to any glory other than a share in the boundless mercies of the Lord of the Harvest.

CHAPTER X

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

John xi. 1–54

Once more Jesus traversed the land of Perea, when a messenger from Bethany, a village near Jerusalem, came seeking Him, and at once greeted Him with these words:

"Lord, he whom you love is sick." [1]

Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, had been struck down by a grievous illness, and in all haste his two sisters had despatched their courier to the Master, fully confident that He only needed to be informed of their trouble, because they felt sure they knew His heart. Mary especially had many proofs of its overflowing tenderness since the day when she anointed the Saviour with fragrant spices and wiped them away with her beautiful hair.[2] There was never a doubt but He would hurry to His friend's bedside, and at His mere approach the danger would flit away. But Jesus was content to listen to the message and make answer:

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

Then He lingered two days longer in this same spot; not from fear, nor from indifference, for "He loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus," but to await the bidding from on high.

At Bethany, however, there was only tremulous and eager expectation; from the brow of the highlands on which the village is built, more than once the two sisters with straining eyes scanned the wide outlook, from the mountains of Perea to the footpaths which lead up to Bethany, longingly watching the road which the Saviour must take. Alas, for their fruitless and forlorn hopes! Lazarus, their brother, died.

As is the custom in hot climates, the body was washed, wrapped in perfumes and linen bands, then borne at once to the funeral grotto, and the wail of the mourners began. The event had collected together a considerable concourse for the household of Lazarus being of distinguished rank, very many Jews of note had come down with a large company from Jerusalem. During all of three days the wonted lamentations resounded through their dwelling and round about the tomb. Martha and Mary, with feet bared and their heads veiled, sat upon the ground and moaned, while around them their friends and neighbours with the wailers together joined in the groans and cries of mourning.

1 John xi. 1–6. 2 Luke vii. 37, 38.

At nightfall of the third day, according to Jewish beliefs, the soul ceased to hover over the cold body. The sepulchre was then visited for the last time, the windingsheet drawn over the face of the dead, and a stone forevermore sealed up this grave which the rabbis called "the Mansion of Eternity."

Thus it seemed that for Lazarus all was finished; [3] but Jesus, Who for two days had rested there without speaking of Bethany, of a sudden said to His disciples: "Let us return into Judea."

"Master," they exclaimed, "it is but a little while since the Jews sought for you that they might stone you, and are you going to put yourself once more into their hands?"

The Lord essayed to calm their fears by declaring that His Mission was like the twelve hours of the day, whose duration no one might shorten by human strength; the Father watched over Him with His Providence; a divine light guided His footsteps, so that He might neither stumble nor fall, until the hour appointed when the shades of darkness would encompass Him about.[4] Then disclosing the motive of His departure He told them:

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to awaken him from his slumber."

"Lord," responded the apostles, "if he sleeps he shall be saved."

They forgot the slumbering from which the Master had aroused the daughter of Jairus, and as usual slow of comprehension, they believed He was speaking of that physical drowsiness which in certain maladies betokens returning health. Then Jesus told them plainly:

"Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, in order that you may believe. But let us go to him."

These words renewed their terrors — they hesitated to follow Him. Then Thomas spurred their courage with those generous words:

"Come," he said, bravely, "let us go and die with Him."

Starting out immediately,[5] Jesus journeyed across Jordan valley and reached Bethany on the morrow. He halted at the outskirts of the village, for though the company had dispersed after the funeral repast of the third day, there were many friends still lingering beside the two sisters. Jesus knew that these personages were powerful in Jerusalem, bound by many ties to the Sanhedrin and sharing its errors; therefore He desired not to excite their attention, but it was impossible to conceal His presence for any length of time. For, although Mary lingered in the darkened dwelling, overwhelmed with sadness, Martha had resumed her active care of household affairs and she was speedily made aware of the Master's arrival. Going out to meet Him she said:

"Lord, if thou had been here my brother would not now be dead. But I know that even now God will grant you whatever you will ask of Him."

"Your brother shall rise again," Jesus said to her.

"I know," she responded, "he shall rise again in the Resurrection, in the last day."

Martha little understood the meaning of the Saviour's promise, and only

[3] John xi. 7, 8. [4] John xi. 9–16. [5] John xi. 17–27.

looked upon it as another consoling thought, such as her friends had been repeating during all of these last three days.

The Christ recalled her to a sense of Who He was Who was now speaking to her, with those words which the Church still uses to comfort us in our bereavement.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, although he be dead he shall live. And he that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die forever. Believest thou this?"

"Yea, Lord," she said, "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who art come into this world."

It was blind, unquestioning faith, rather than any understanding of the words of Jesus, which moved Martha to this acknowledgment; Mary, the contemplative soul, was better fitted to understand these exalted truths. With this thought uppermost in mind Martha sped homeward to summon her sister.[6] She found her in the great house, still crouched upon the ground, her spirit absorbed in grief. Approaching her as quietly as possible, she whispered:

"The Master is yonder; He is asking for you."

In a moment Mary had risen and was on her way to Jesus. The Jews who were with her in the house and comforted her, seeing her depart so speedily, followed her, saying:

"She is going to weep at the tomb."

On leaving the village they descried Jesus with a little knot of disciples still waiting on the same spot where Martha had just met them. At sight of Him, Mary fell at His feet, murmuring the same reproachful words which for these last three days the two sisters had kept repeating to each other.

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died!" She could add no more — her tears spoke and she prayed.

Around her the Jews meanwhile seemed to have forgotten their hatred of the Christ; like Mary, they too were sobbing. So mightily did these tokens of love and sorrow shake the soul of Jesus that His spirit was stirred and troubled with Him.

"Where have you laid him?" He said.

"Lord, come and see!"

And Jesus wept.

"See how He loved him," said the Jews.[7] But with some there was a feeling of bitterness mingled with their pity.

"And yet," added the latter, "could he not have hindered Lazarus from dying — he who was able to open the eyes of a man born blind?"

This reproach Jesus also overheard, and again shuddering beneath the weight of human sorrows, He halted before the tomb. According to the fashion with wealthy Jews, it was a cavern chiselled out of the rock, and sealed with a stone.

"Take away the stone," He said.

Martha was fain to withstand this order.

"Master, he is already corrupt; it is four days since he died."

6 John xi. 28–35. 7 John xi. 36–44.

Then the Lord replied: "Did I not say to you that if you believe you shall see the glory of God?"

The stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and the body disclosed. The two sisters with their friends drew closer about the Master, with tear dimmed glances riveted upon the gloomy cave. Stepping nearer and raising His eyes towards Heaven, Jesus spoke:

"Father," He began, "I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard me. For Myself, I know that Thou hearest Me always, but for the sake of these people who stand about Me I have spoken thus, in order that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Then He cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!"

And instantly the dead emerged from the grave with feet and hands wrapped with the winding bands, with his face shrouded under the linen kerchiefs, while at the spectacle all stood speechless and white with terror.

"Loose his bands," Jesus said, "and let him go."

The cere-cloth fell from off his features, the winding-sheets slipped from his limbs, and Lazarus stood there in the sight of his bewildered friends.

Saint John, who was a witness of this marvel, adds that very many of the Jews who had come hither to Martha and Mary, having seen this which Jesus did, believed in Him.[8] But some of the company made haste to inform the Sanhedrin. That assembly was struck with the liveliest alarm. The Passover was close at hand; already from every quarter of Judea the people were starting out on their way to Jerusalem. What did this Nazarene mean by coming up almost to the very gates of the Holy City to work a miracle like this? Was He about to declare Himself king and arouse the Jews against their Roman masters? Fears of this sort reduced them to such a state of perplexity that they forthwith called an assembly of the national council.

Thanks to the members of the Sanhedrin who were afterwards converted, Saint John was made acquainted with what took place in this gathering.

"What are we doing?" the princes of Jewry asked of one another.[9] "This man is working many miracles. If we let him go on acting thus, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and destroy our city and our nation."

Their annoyance and anxiety were extreme, and the various counsels contradictory and confusing; at this juncture Joseph Caïphas arose. As high priest for that year, his dignity, however degraded by Roman corruption, still gave great weight to his words.

"You neither understand anything of all this," he began, "nor do you consider that it is far better that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Caïphas disclosed his whole character in this saying, wherein his pride, his contempt for justice, his unscrupulous cruelty are openly unmasked. But he was also (though without knowing it) making himself the mouthpiece of God — for the gift of prophecy was in some sort a prerogative of the pontificate; and Jehovah, Who for long ages had been wont to speak by the Urim and the Tum-

8 John xi. 45, 46. 9 John xi. 47–53.

mim of the High Priest, once again upon this day set His oracle on the lips of a descendant of Aaron. This is John's testimony:

"Caïphas said this, not of himself; but being pontiff for this year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for His nation, and not only for His nation, but furthermore that He might gather together in one God's children who are scattered abroad."

It would appear that the High Priest's advice did not excite the slightest opposition. The greater number of councillors were Sadducees; doubt and scepticism had frozen their hearts and poisoned every upright and honest tendency of their minds; they immediately seized this politic recommendation and resolved to adopt it, by compassing the death of Jesus.

If we are to believe the tradition, this decision was arrived at, not in Jerusalem, but upon a certain highland in the suburbs which still bears the name of "Evil Council." There Caïphas possessed a country house, and his purpose in assembling the Sanhedrin in this retired spot, was to preserve secrecy in regard to the sentence found against the Nazarene. But Jesus counted several friends in the supreme council; though Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had not the courage openly to undertake His defence, they at least were not implicated in the conspiracy,[10] and probably it was upon receiving their warning that the Saviour decided to quit Jerusalem.

Accompanied by a chosen band of followers, He set out for the tract of country which stretches between Bethel and the Jordan, and withdrew until well nigh within the borders of Samaria, to a town called Ephrem. There He consecrated the last weeks of His life to intimate converse with His disciples; and the secret of His retreat was not betrayed, for when, a little later, the Sanhedrin synod ordained that anyone who knew where He was should deliver Him up to them, no one disclosed His habitation.[11] We do not know why the princes of Jewry precipitated their first resolution and decided to lay hands upon the Christ at once. Did they wish to have Him safely chained in their dungeons, so that they might examine His case at leisure, question Him and confront Him with their witnesses? Did they meditate making away with Him secretly? Whatever design they may have had in mind, it was certainly one intended to effect the destruction of the Saviour, and very soon they would find nothing in the way of their desires — for Jesus was about to emerge from His last place of refuge and of His own will deliver Himself into their hands.

10 Luke xxiii. 51. 11 John xi. 56.

CHAPTER XI

JESUS' LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

I. The Ten Lepers — The Coming of the Son of Man — The Judge and the Widow — The Pharisee and the Publican

Luke xvii. 11–37; xviii. 1–14; Matt. xix. 1–2; Mark x. 1

However much of ungratefulness the land of Israel had shown Him, Jesus dearly loved His native country, as the mother loves the child of her sorrows, and He would not die without revisiting the places whither He had once carried the good news of salvation. So a few weeks before the Paschal-tide, He left Ephrem wending His way northward, travelled across Samaria and Galilee, and when upon their frontiers wrought one of his last miracles.

On the outskirts of a little hamlet,[1] shrill cries reached His ears: they came from a group of ten lepers who lived together near this spot. They durst not approach closer, for any contact with them, even their passing breath was a contamination, yet so soon as they recognised the Saviour, they lifted up their voice crying all together:

"Jesus! Master! have pity upon us!"

The Lord granted their hearts' desire: —

"Go," said He, "show yourselves to the priests."

They obeyed instantly, and even as they were on their way to those who could rightfully certify to their cure, they felt a purer life-blood surging up within their veins, the hideous pallor was fast yielding to the swift pulse of health; their malady had disappeared!

But what was it happened by the roadside, and what was the reason they showed such coldness of heart? was it their own evil natures or some fear of the Jews, or was it the prompting of some foes of Jesus, which held them back from Him? We do not know; all that the Gospel tells us is that of the ten lepers only one retraced his steps, with a loud voice glorifying God the while, and that this one was a Samaritan. A denizen of that border-land of Judea, he had found no difficulty in gaining admittance among these lepers of Israel; the wretched disease which was the common fate of such outcasts always levelled any barriers of rank between fellow sufferers; but once the affliction was lifted away the barriers arose of themselves. So the nine Jews had left the Samaritan to throw himself alone at the feet of Jesus. Well accustomed as the Saviour was to all manner of ingratitude, this last token of heartlessness dismayed Him.

"Were not the ten cleansed," He said; "where then are the nine others? There was none found who returned to give glory to God, save this stranger!"

Only in this last-named soul could Jesus complete the work of grace; already He had touched the Samaritan's heart. He now made him one of His disciples.

1 Luke xvii. 12–19.

"Arise," He said to him, "and go your way: your faith has saved you."

The healing of the lepers attracted the attention of the Galilean Pharisees, which for some months had been diverted from the Christ. The youthful teacher reappeared before them with all His wonted marks of power, mighty in deed and in word, as of old, continuing always to publish the approach of God's kingdom although without any token of preparations for the establishment of a terrestrial empire — with no signs of royal pomp or splendid victories; meek, gentle, terrible only to the devils, He everywhere yielded to the violence of man, was hunted from town to town from one land to another. What then was there to hope from a Messiah who was like to be destroyed after this fashion, along with His fruitless promises? Were the preparations for His much talked of coming to be neverending? Wearied with this prolonged course of deception, as they construed it, the Pharisees approached Him.

"When," they inquired contemptuously, "will the 'Kingdom of God' come?"

The Lord replied that it was needless for them to stand and gaze, waiting for some new marvel to burst upon their ecstatic vision and overcome them "by outward shows." His realm was not like those of earth, which are established at the expense of wars and wondrous feats of strength. No glittering court is arrayed around the new King, no wondering throngs, attracted by His gorgeous state, gather about Him shouting "Lo, here He is! Yonder He stands!" [2]

"The Kingdom of God," Jesus said, "is within you" — plainly visible to the pure of heart, unseen by the eyes of flesh; a heavenly empire, which, for nineteen centuries, has never yet appeared outside the holy sanctuary of the soul, and until today is still denied by the very men who daily see millions of subjects bowing beneath the invisible sceptre of the Christ!

So for the Pharisees, who were strangers to the Kingdom of God, this response was sufficient; but it was not enough for the disciples, who were its true children. The Master warned them that they were to be persecuted and, as it would seem, abandoned by God; "that they should greatly desire to behold again one of those days" which they had spent in blessed companionship with the Son of Man, but that they should see the like never again. Then would it behove them to remain steadfast and turn a deaf ear to the blandishments of deceivers who would cry, "Lo, here He is! See! He is here!" [3] Vain and empty clamour! A bootless quest! Jesus shall no more return, until time is at an end, and then with such flashing and crashing of thunderbolts that the deaf and the blind shall wot thereof.[4] This last coming shall be "swift as the lightning," wild and furious "as those great floods which swallowed up Noë's fellow-countrymen," terrible "as the showers of fire, in which Sodom was engulfed." [5] Woe to the man, who, in that dread day, finds himself unable to disentangle his heart from the burning wreck of the world, and refuses to turn his back upon it, "like Lot's wife" longing to cast one more glance on the habi-

2 Luke xvii. 21.
3 Luke xvii. 23.
4 Luke xvii. 24.
5 Luke xvii. 26–29.

tations of evil! That shall be a season of sickening surprises, heartrending separations, the night of eternity, when as "there shall be two together in the same bed, the one shall be taken, the other left." [6]

Every line in this prophecy applied in like manner to the judgment which each man must undergo, to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and to the last high court which shall doom or deliver the world. At these three awful epochs Jesus declared that God's justice would be equally sudden and unlooked for. But this lofty plane of thought was far above the comprehension of His apostles; with their minds filled with the imagery of Joel, they believed they were already nigh upon the day foretold by the prophet: "Day of clouds and tempests . . . when the sun shall change into thick darkness, the moon to blood, the earth shall be covered with flame and whirlwinds of smoke." Already their eyes were looking for the valley of Josaphat, "the valley of slaughter, whither, with a roaring out of Sion, Jehovah shall gather all the peoples of the earth." [7]

"Where, Lord?" they cried.[8]

"Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together," was Jesus' answer.

Thus the divine justice knows neither time nor place, but strikes down sin wheresoever it befouls the earth. In that hour, when the measure of the world's wickedness shall be filled to overflowing and naught but the senseless corse of iniquity remains, then the avenging eagle of divine justice shall sweep down upon their prey. They shall be gathered together in the words of the seer of Patmos,[9] "unto the great supper of God, that they may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of chieftains in battle, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, the flesh of all men, free men and slaves, the little and the great . . . and all the birds were gorged with their flesh."

The vision of judgment froze the disciples' hearts with fear. To reassure them the Master forwarned them that they need not be overtaken by surprise, if they would but look steadfastly heavenwards; and so, by means of two parables, He taught them more in regard to prayer.

The first showed them what is the power of perseverance,[10] and that they must "pray always without ever being wearied."

An unrighteous and prevaricating judge for a long time refuses to hear the case of a poor widow; at last he consents, worn out by her ceaseless complaints.

"Even though I have no fear of God," he says, "and care nothing for man, yet because this widow is burdensome, to me, I will grant her justice, lest she finally overpower me."

"You hear," added the Lord, "what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God grant justice to His elect who cry to Him night and day, and will He impose a long delay upon them? No, I say unto you, He will grant them justice right speedily."

6 Luke xvii. 32-35.
7 Joel iii. 14-16.
8 Luke xvii. 36, 37.
9 Apoc. xix. 17, 18, 21.
10 Luke xviii. 1-8.

The theme of the second parable was the humility with which it befits us to pray.[11] The Master could not note the ignorance and the carnal craving of His disciples without sorrowing over them.

"Think you," He exclaimed, "that the Son of Man when He returns, shall find faith on earth?"

Indeed, at this very time when He was fashioning their hearts for prayer, there was nothing but rivalry and dissension in the souls of His followers: each one boasting of his own merits, proud of his own outward semblance of piety; while in their presumption some went so far as even to despise their fellow men. To these self-conceited spirits, Jesus told a story of two men who went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a publican. In the presence of the Lord, the Pharisee displays all the arrogance of his sect; with his head thrown back proudly, his countenance all complacent and self-satisfied, he stands there, not so much to pray as to sing his own praises:

"My God," he says, "I give Thee thanks for that I am not like unto the rest of men, who are violent, unjust, unclean; as also is yonder publican. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes upon all that I possess."

Afar off from the altar, before which the Pharisee had planted himself, the publican stood, not daring so much as to lift up his eyes unto heaven; with head bowed down he smites his breast, repeating in low voice:

"O God! have pity upon me who am a sinner!"

And Jesus added: "I tell you this man went down to his house justified, and not the other, for he who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

II. Divorce — Jesus with the Children — The Rich Young Man — The Workmen in the Vineyard

Mark x. 2–31; Matt. xix. 3–30; xx. 1–16; Luke xviii. 15–30

This lesson was the last which Galilee was to hear from the great teacher. Bidding His native land a last farewell, Jesus crossed Jordan and descended the eastern bank of the stream. Soon Pharisees of Perea crowded around Him again; they no longer came to listen, but to tempt the Master.[12]

"Is it allowable," they began, "to leave the wife for any reason, whatever it may be?"

A weighty question this, and one just now engrossing the attention of Jewish doctors, as it turned upon that obscure text in Deuteronomy:[13] "When the man who has married a wife, conceives a loathing of the woman, because he has found some stain upon her, he shall give her a writing of divorce, and having put it within the woman's hands, he shall send her out of his house."

What were they to understand by the word *stain*? Did any corporal infirmity, or the least lightness of conduct deserve this epithet? In a word, was any slight pretext sufficient to break all conjugal ties? Hillel and his school championed this opinion. Of rigider views the disciples of Shammaï only con-

11 Luke xviii. 9–14. 12 Matt. xix. 3–6. 13 Deut. xxiv. 1.

ceded that divorce was lawful in cases showing scandalous disorders. But their austere principles were little relished by the many; great men of the people, Levites, Doctors of the Law, and generally speaking, all private individuals treated the marriage bond with a liberty which was not far from license; divorce had simply replaced polygamy, and though the Israelite no longer maintained a number of wives under the same roof, he managed to pass from one to another, according to the promptings of his fancy. Doubtless Judea never knew the excesses of the pagan world; here the women did not, as in Rome, reckon the years of their life by the number of their husbands,[14] but, whatever restraint the laws of Moses still imposed upon them, they had become powerless to check this increasing profligacy in the conduct of life.

So, then, for Jesus to take any part in this controversy by answering the Pharisees' question would be to strike full at the worst passions of those about Him; at the same time it would be a blow direct at the tetrarch whose territory they were crossing, thus branding his union as incestuous adultery. For just such daring frankness as this John Baptist had forfeited his head. But no such fears could gain access to the soul of Jesus; alike indifferent to the hatred of the populace and to Herod's anger, His only care was to uplift their hearts to thoughts of less carnal things. And therefore He disdained to pronounce between Hillel and Shammaï, content to remind them that the union of man and wife must remain an eternal bond between them. God Himself, on the first day of the world, had established this order, commanding the man to leave his father and his mother and give himself altogether to her, thereafter being but one with his espoused. It was in token of this fruitful unity that He had created male and female, and taken Eve from the side of sleeping Adam.

"Even so," the Lord concluded, "they are no more twain,[15] but the one same flesh. Then let not man put asunder what God hath joined together."

The Pharisees comprehended that Jesus had avoided their pitfall by uttering these words, but they were anxious to involve Him in direct contradiction with the Law.

"But, why, then," they objected,[16] "did Moses command us to give the woman a bill of divorce and so leave her?"

They indeed had transformed the toleration of an act into a positive precept. To lay bare their trickery, Jesus needed only to explain what was the true spirit animating the Law.

"It was because of the hardness of your hearts," He replied calmly, "that Moses permitted you to leave your wives, but at the beginning it was not thus." Whereupon He added those words which have dowered the marriage state with its final perfection: "I say unto you, every man that leaves his wife, except it be for adultery, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries the wife that is thus put away commits adultery."

His enemies realised that the Christ had vanquished them; they durst not so much as contend that this teaching was an open affront to Herod, as well

14 Seneca. 15 Gen. iii. 24. 16 Matt. xix. 7-9; Mark x. 4-9.

as a drastic measure of reform for all Israel. Discomfited and abashed, they were obliged to let Him withdraw into His dwelling-place unmolested.

Hardly were they within doors when the disciples began to question in their turn.

"If the case stands thus between husband and wife," they said, "it were better by far not to marry." [17]

No more telling testimony could be found as to the depth of degradation to which public morals had descended than these words. So, even the apostles looked upon the notion of marital fidelity as an intolerable idea; the sadness and the reproach of a single life seemed slight and insignificant compared to the irksomeness of such an unbearable yoke.

Far from abating His law by one whit, the Master responded that it was only the first step in the way of chastity now set before the feet of His faithful followers; for very soon a heavenly grace would impel His chosen souls to loftier heights, and so bear them beyond the reach of earthly loves and desires. To make known this mystery of the stainless soul to these rough fishermen of Galilee would seem a hopeless task; but notwithstanding, Jesus essayed to raise their minds to that supreme standpoint.

In uttering their cry of discouragement, they had unwittingly spoken truth: "It were better not to marry!"

"All men," added the Lord, "comprehend not this saying, but only those to whom it is given."

And to mark the road to this knowledge, He spoke of the eunuchs in the courts of Eastern monarchs. It must needs be some inherited misfortune, or perhaps their master's cruelty, which had put them beyond the reach of carnal delights; yet how much mightier and more efficacious is the Christian's holiness, which, by spiritual strength, suffices to transform the eunuch of the heavenly courts into a man who, while tarrying in these our fleshly habitations, is no longer of the flesh, but partakes rather of the angel than of man. Still, as yet Jesus could not do more than barely lift the veil which concealed this austere continency from the ancient world, and that but for an instant.

"Whosoever is able to understand, let him understand!" He said to His disciples.

But there were few among them so freed from the slavery of the senses as to be able to glimpse the loveliness of a virgin soul. It would be necessary for the Holy Spirit to descend upon them ere their ears could be opened to that hymning of Virgins to which John harkened in the celestial vision — "harmonious as the quiring of many harps, a song which none can either learn or understand, save only they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." [18]

Even as He was speaking, the Saviour noted the entrance of a little group of mothers who had brought with them their little ones.[19] Learning that the Master was about to depart from their neighbourhood they were eager to have Him lay His hands upon the children's heads and breathe a prayer over them.

17 Matt. xix. 10–12. 18 Apoc. xiv. 2–4. 19 Luke xviii. 15–17; Mark x. 13–16; Matt. xix. 13–15.

Indeed it was then a hallowed usage among pious folk to beg a blessing for their babies at the hands of doctors whom they revered; and Jesus all the more willingly sanctioned the old custom because the sweet purity of babyhood always refreshed and gladdened His heart. But the apostles only regarded these newcomers as troublesome intruders, and "they rebuffed them with harsh words"; and thereat Jesus was much displeased with them, saying:

"Suffer these little children and forbid them not to come unto Me, for God's Kingdom is for such as are like unto them." And immediately, calling them about Him, He took them into His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them.

The disciples stood gazing at this scene, amazed at seeing Him display such tender familiarity with children; they did not know, as yet, that it belonged to Jesus to quicken these feeble bodies with an invisible life, and make them heirs of a heavenly glory, by the gift of baptism. Already He had proclaimed their prerogatives more than once, and again on this day He declared the same truth once more, for, before bidding them farewell, He held these little ones up as the model for His disciples.

"In very truth, I say unto you," these were His words, "whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein."

Almost immediately Jesus came forth from the dwelling in which He had been giving them these lovely lessons of life and proceeded along the road. At once a young man came running after Him.

According to Saint Luke's account [20] he was a personage of distinction in those parts, a youth of great and noble heart, that could not be satisfied with the righteousness of the Law, but hungered and thirsted for purer and higher truths. All that he had heard about Jesus made him hope that the Master would soon reveal the mysteries which still overshadowed the ancient scriptures; and he made haste to kneel before Him, asking:

"Good Master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

Jesus did not accept this praise.

"Why do you call Me good?" He said; "why do you question Me concerning that which is good? [21] There is none good save God alone."

His answer plainly implies that this young nobleman sought in Jesus only a man like himself, and it was meant to teach him that, as mercy and goodness are in the gift of the divine being, he must not seek of any of His creatures — who obtain them by grace — but from God Himself, in Whom they abide in their fullness. But nevertheless, added the Lord, "if you would enter into life keep the commandments."

"Which commandments?" ejaculated the young man in amazement; for he had looked for some new light, and could not believe that the Master would simply refer him to the precepts of the Law.

To make him understand that God esteems humble faith as of higher worth than splendid achievements, Jesus merely quoted from the Mosaic ordinances those duties which govern the everyday life of men:

20 Luke xviii. 18–23. 21 Matt. xix. 17; Mark x. 18.

"Thou shalt not be an adulterer; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not defraud any one; honour thy father and thy mother, and love thy neighbour as thyself." [22]

"Master," replied the young man in his bewilderment, "I have observed all this from my youth; what lack I yet?" [23]

Jesus, looking long upon him, loved him, for He saw the lad was of a true and upright heart, sincere and earnest in the pursuit of righteousness: [24] rising above the beaten roads which all must run, He pointed out the narrow track, which leads the saints up to the far heights of perfection.

"One thing is lacking yet," He said; "go, sell all that you have, and give it to the poor. You shall have a treasure in Heaven; then come and follow Me." [25]

It was too much; the young Jew's courage failed him; a great sadness fell upon his soul. Grief-struck and with a sombre countenance, "he went away, for he had great possessions."

Jesus followed him, with His eyes, thinking on all the souls that would be ruined by riches and looking about Him at His disciples —

"How difficult it is," He said to them, "for the rich [26] to enter into God's Kingdom!"

It was not the first time the Master had expressed Himself thus before them, but their ears, as well as their hearts, were closed to the truths which offended and shocked them; and they were as much astonished now at this saying as though it were some new thing.

Jesus gave no signs of irritation; yet, without abating one whit of its former severity, He repeated what He had often said, but in the most touching manner; no mother ever displayed greater tenderness in pressing to her baby's lips the bitter drink which will save its life.

"My dearly beloved sons," came the answer, "ah! how hard it is for those that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into God's Kingdom."

Thus the sentence was formal and explicit; it condemned all attachment to earthly goods. The apostles were still more amazed, and, standing there, they began to say to one another —

"But, then, who can be saved?"

Looking at them still, Jesus replied in the same gentle accents:

"With men this is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible."

Peter, as hasty and eager as ever, always the first to regain his courage as he was first to despair — Peter here broke in upon his Master.[27]

"Lord," said he, "we have left all to follow you, what shall there be for us?"

The Saviour's response was a succession of promises: for the apostles, there were set twelve thrones whence they should judge the tribes of Israel in the

22 Mark x. 19.
23 Matt. xix. 20.
24 Mark x. 21.
25 Luke xviii. 22.
26 Mark x. 23–27.
27 Matt. xix. 27–29.

day when, with all things born unto the new life, the Son of Man shall take possession of the throne of His Majesty; and for all His faithful disciples, even from this present time, an hundredfold for everything they shall have left, whether it be home, or brothers, sisters, parents, husband or wife, children or lands; a foretaste of Heaven "even in the midst of persecution, and in the ages to come life everlasting."

So gracious and glorious were those prerogatives that Jesus feared lest His apostles should be puffed up with pride at the glowing prospect, and imagine that such was their rightful inheritance; for this reason He went on at once to add that they were purely the gifts of grace, and that if the sons of Israel were the first to be called, yet the Gentiles should precede them and share all things with them in that celestial kingdom. The heavenly Father, in that new realm, is like the lord of a vineyard,[28] who hires workmen at different hours of the day; when the night comes he is free to reward the last comers with the denarius promised to those who have toiled since daybreak; for that same denarius represents eternal life, which is beyond anything man can merit — a gratuitous recompense, born of God's boundless love.

To the Jews who grudge the Gentiles their portion, to the Pharisees of every age, God will make answer:

"My friend, I do you no wrong; did you not agree with Me for a denarius? Then take what is yours and go. If notwithstanding I wish to give unto this last as much as to you, is it not lawful for me to do what I will with Mine own, and must your eye be evil, because I am good?"

And Jesus concluded by uttering one of those maxims He so often repeated, which were so heartrending to the haughty spirit of the Jews —

"The first shall be last, and the last first."

"Many are called but few chosen!"

CHAPTER XII

JERICHO AND BETHANY

Luke xviii. 31–43; xix. 1–28; Mark x. 32–52; xiv. 3–9; Matt. xx. 17–34; xxvi. 6–13; John xii. 1–11

Preaching and blessing His people Jesus descended the eastern bank of the Jordan. Arrived at the spot where the road veers off Jerusalemward and crosses the stream the disciples saw that He was making as if to take that direction, and they were seized with such trepidation and dismay that for the most part they stood motionless and dumbfounded; the Master, however, walked on before them, and the apostles alone slowly followed, but at a distance, and filled with overwhelming fears.[1]

The Saviour stopped, made a sign to the Twelve to draw nearer, and there-

28 Matt. xx. 1–16. 1 Mark x. 32.

upon announced His Passion for the third time, foretelling clearly (which hitherto He had not done) that He was to hang upon the Cross.

"Look you now, we are going up to Jerusalem," He said, "and soon all things which the prophets have written concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. He shall be delivered unto the princes of the priesthood and to the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and they shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. He shall be mocked and reviled; they shall spit upon His face; after they have scourged Him they shall crucify Him, and the third day He shall rise again." [2]

Jesus could not have described in distincter terms the sufferings by which He must needs establish His Kingdom; but the disciples were so engrossed in their Judaic visions of the Messiah's advent "that they understood naught of all these things, and this saying, plain and unmistakable as it was, "remained hidden to them." [3] They only concluded that their Master was soon to inaugurate His reign, and thus they were as much preoccupied as ever with dreams of wondrous wealth, mighty thrones, and earthly greatness.

Certainly nothing could give us a better idea of the heavy bandage which covered their eyes than the step taken just at this juncture by the wife of Zebedee [4] the fisherman.

Her two sons hurried to her side, overflowing with all they had just been hearing from the Lord's lips; they instructed her that there were great things now close at hand, grievous trials, to be followed shortly by a splendid Resurrection and a surpassing glory. Was it not high time to arrange for the foremost places under the Messiah's new reign? Eager and excited as James and John were, they knew with what sternness the Master rebuked anything like selfish ambition; they therefore durst not utter their requests themselves. But their mother Salome, like many other women, had quitted Galilee to be one of His companions and minister to His needs. Her sons believed that her prayer would be all-powerful to reach the heart of Jesus, and so they made her a sharer in their high soaring hopes.

With the two young men following after she made her way to the Lord, knelt down at His feet, and besought Him to grant whatever she might ask of Him.

"What is it you desire?" Jesus responded.

"Only say," proceeded Salome, "that my two sons here may sit, the one on your right hand, the other on your left, in your kingdom."

The Saviour had compassion upon their blindness; to right and to left of Him but a few days later there would be raised two crosses, and upon them two tortured thieves would meet a dreadful death.

"You know not what you ask," He said, quietly; then openly alluding to the awful pangs of His Passion and bloody death, "Can you drink the chalice [5] which I must drink," He demanded, "or receive the baptism wherewith I must be baptised?"

2 Luke xviii. 31–33; Mark x. 33, 34; Matt. xx. 18, 19.
3 Luke xviii. 34.
4 Matt. xx. 20; Mark x. 35–40.
5 Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 36; Luke xxii. 42; John xviii. 11.

James and John fancied that all this merely meant whether they dared to brave some great peril for His sake, and they replied instantly —

"We can!"

Jesus loved the generous souls of these two "Sons of the Thunder," and later on, He would accept their sacrifice; for James did indeed meet a martyr's death, the first of all the apostles, and John survived the rest only that he might fulfil a longer space of suffering. But as for the first seats in His Kingdom, the Master declared that He was unable to show partiality in disposing of them, for God alone dispenses the graces whereby the highest merits are attained, and man himself can alone render those graces efficacious by corresponding to the designs of Heaven.

However secretly the two brothers had preferred their request it reached the ears of the apostles.[6] All were highly incensed; they had already begun to inveigh against the ambitious pair, each boasting of his own great merits, when Jesus called them to Him. Again He set to work teaching them, as He had done so many times before, that in His holy Realm the highest rank is reserved for the humblest souls; just the opposite of those earthly empires where the great ones of a day seek only to enhance the splendour of their borrowed authority, "he who is first in the Church must be the servant of all, and imitate that model, which is the Son of Man, Who came, not to be served, but Himself to serve, and to give His life for the redemption of many."

Meantime Jesus and His companions had crossed Jordan valley and were approaching Jericho. By this name they designated what was in those days an oasis glittering with the clustered pleasure-houses and gardens of the great, glowing with palm trees and fields of roses. At either extremity of this rich stretch of country two towns had been built: near the fountain of Eliseus stood the Jericho of ancient days, overthrown by Joshua and reconstructed by Hiel of Bethel, at the southern end was the new city of Jericho, a magnificent pile of edifices erected by Herod and Archelaus.

As the Lord was passing along the highway which connects these two cities, He came across a blind man seated by the wayside; it was the son of Timeus (Bar-Timeus), who was begging in company with another unfortunate.[7] A great concourse of people had already crowded about Jesus, and were following Him from town to town, meaning to enter Herod's city of Jericho in His train. The blind men listened to the clamour of the multitude; learning that it was Jesus of Nazareth they began to cry out —

"Jesus, Son of David, have pity upon us!"

Their shrill shouts kept growing more importunate until those who passed before them began to rail at them, bidding them hold their peace. They only cried out the louder —

"Have pity on us, O Lord, Son of David!"

Touched with compassion Jesus stopped and commanded that they be brought to Him. A number hurried to Bar-Timeus.

6 Mark x. 41–45.

7 Matt. xx. 29–34; Mark x, 46–52; Luke xviii, 35–43.

"Be of good cheer," they told him; "rise up, He is calling you."

The blind man cast away his long mantle, and guided by those who were nearest him rushed towards where Jesus stood.

"What would you have Me to do for you?" said the Lord.

"Master," he replied, "that I may see!"

"Go," Jesus said; "your faith hath saved you."

In like manner He called the other blind man; laying His hands upon His eyes they were opened; and the two followed on after Him in the midst of a multitude that joined them in shouting glory and praise to God.

There were still some six hours of foot-travel before they could reach Bethany. Jesus resolved to spend the night in Jericho.[8] Along these grand streets, through which resounded the shouts of the throngs proclaiming His glory, many doors would then eagerly have been flung open to welcome Him, but, even to the last day steadfast in His design of seeking out the lost sheep of Israel, He asked the hospitality of a dwelling despised by all the citizens.

At this time there were many publicans residing in Jericho; for this city was the bonding-warehouse of Perea, and the Roman treasury here regulated its tax-levies upon the incoming wealth of the valley, and particularly upon the balm which is so abundant in this country. At the head of the tax collectors was a personage named Zacheus, hated by the populace because of the great fortune he had accumulated in the exercise of his office, and especially because, though by birth a Jew, he lent his aid to their foreign masters. Notwithstanding, he was a generous and upright man, much nearer the Kingdom of Heaven than his enemies.

As it happened, on this day all his efforts to get sight of Jesus were unavailing, for the crowd kept thrusting him aside contemptuously, and his short stature did not allow his seeing very far. At last he resolved to run on ahead and climb into an Egyptian figtree which overshadowed the road. The Saviour would surely pass by this spot, and so Zacheus would at last get sight of Him Who was known as "The Friend of the Publicans." His good fortune exceeded his brightest hopes; for he beheld the Master, as He trod the dusty highway, halt, raise His eyes, and, meeting his longing look, heard Him call him by name.

"Zacheus, make haste and come down, for today I must lodge in your house."

The publican instantly obeyed, and overwhelmed with gladness conducted the Christ to his residence.

The Jews followed after with murmurs of disapproval.

"He is going to lodge in the house of a sinner!" they said, and all were incensed that, while disdaining the Levites and nobility of Jericho, Jesus should reserve His favours for this outcast of the people.

But their insults and jeers had little effect upon the happy host; overflowing with great joy he opened his heart to the Saviour even before he could fling wide the gates of his home, and by such tokens proved his worthiness to be ad-

8 Luke xix. 1–10.

mitted into the Kingdom of Heaven. And indeed on the morrow, standing up before the multitude, he made this generous renunciation:

"Lord, behold, now I give the half of my goods to the poor, and for every wrong that I have done I now return fourfold."

In a word, he had risen far above the perfection prescribed by the Law; not content with making reparation for the past, he made sacrifice of his lawful rights and property, offering it to the poor. Moved by this ready self-abnegation the Lord held up this publican, ennobled by his charity, as a model for the people.

"Today," He said, "this household has found salvation, and this man is truly a child of Abraham, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

As we have said, this took place on the day following Zacheus' reception of his divine guest, and just at the moment when Jesus was taking leave of His host.[9] The crowds had assembled anew about the portals of Zacheus' mansion, and impatiently awaited the departure of the Master; for His reappearance after such a long period of seclusion, the miracle of the preceding afternoon, His avowed intention to show Himself in Jerusalem, all seemed to imply that the mission of the Christ was to come speedily to an issue. Already it had begun to be common talk in Jericho that "the Kingdom of God was to be made manifest immediately," [10] and the whole town was absorbed in expectancy. Before withdrawing from their midst the Lord wished to dissipate these dreams of a temporal glory. High up in sight of all the listening townfolk towered that great palace which Archelaus had built. This monument of fallen grandeur was a perpetual reminder of their exiled prince and the striking features of his reign — his journey to Rome, his investiture with the rule of Judea at the hands of Augustus, the Jews' bitter opposition to this proceeding, his servants' defence of their master's estates during his absence, and the vengeance which he wrecked upon his foes on his return. Out of these reminiscences still burning in the minds of His auditors Jesus saw fit to compose the Parable of the Pounds.[11]

"A man of noble birth went into a far-distant region to take possession of a kingdom and to return speedily. Now, after calling together ten of his servants, he gave them ten mina [12] and told them:

" 'Trade herewith till I come.'

"But the people of his land hated him; and they sent an embassy after him, saying:

" 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

"So, when he returned, having taken possession of the kingdom, he had those servants summoned to whom he had given the money, that he might know what each had gained by trading.

"The first came, saying:

" 'Lord, your mina has made ten.'

9 Luke xix. 28.

10 Luke xix. 11.

11 Luke xix. 12–27.

12 [A mina (attic) would be about $20.]

"And he said to him:

" 'Well done, good servant that you are; because you have been faithful in a little matter you shall have power over ten cities.'

"And the second came, saying:

" 'Lord, your mina has made five.'

"Then he said to him also:

" 'And you likewise shall be over five cities.'

"And the other came, saying:

" 'Lord, see, here is your mina which I have kept wrapped up in a napkin; for I feared you, because you are an austere man; you take up what you laid not down, you reap that which you have not sown.'

"Then he said unto him:

" 'Thou wicked servant, thou shalt be judged out of thine own mouth. Thou knowest that I am an austere man, taking up what I have not laid down, and reaping that which I have not sown; why, then, didst thou not give my money into the bank, that at my return I might have exacted it with usury?' And he said to them that stood by:

" 'Take away his mina from him and give it to him who has ten.'

"And they said to him:

" 'Lord he has ten mina.'

"But I say unto you: To every one that hath it shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken away. As for those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them in my presence."

By its allusions to those current events which were even then changing the face of Judea this parable captivated the crowds, while at the same time it answered another purpose, for it announced to the Jews who looked to find in Jesus a monarch of this world that soon they would disown Him, and in Pilate's pretorium would repeat the very cry once uttered by the enemies of Archelaus: "We will not have this man to reign over us!" The punishment of the rebels would certainly be fearful; but to the disciples, on the contrary, there was a recompense assured which was to be the more magnificent in proportion as their fidelity should show itself more earnest and eager. Howbeit, let them not expect to receive it altogether in this life, but on that day when the Christ shall return invested with an Eternal Kinghood.

With this prophetic lesson Jesus left the people of Jericho, and took the road leading toward Jerusalem in company with His apostles. The multitude followed Him respectfully; they watched Him as He led the way through the deep defiles of the mountain, making His way up towards the Holy City.[13] But he did not mean to enter its gates on this day, since He had decided to stop at Bethany, and thus make Lazarus' house His last dwelling place on earth.

He reached their residence on Friday evening, about the time when, with the setting sun, began "the sixth day before the Passover." On the morrow all observed the sacred repose, but during the late hours of that Sabbath after-

13 Luke xix. 28.

noon the Lord's entertainers celebrated His arrival by a great feast, which took place "in the house of Simon the Leper." Who was this townsman of Bethany, who is mentioned nowhere else in the Gospel? Did he owe the cure of his malady to the Christ, and so was he one of those who sat down to the board which was spread in his dining-hall on this day? Or, again, although long since dead, is he mentioned here because universally known as the father of Lazarus and the two sisters? Between these conjectures, both equally probable, it is difficult to choose; but whoever Simon the Leper may have been, we know that the dinner given in his mansion was of sufficient splendour to attract thither a goodly company of Jews curious to see Jesus and this His friend who such a little while ago was raised from the dead.

At sight of the Master seated beside Lazarus, and remembering all His benefits, Mary's heart was thrilled, and she cast about in her mind for some token of homage, whereby to give evidence of her gratefulness.[14] At once her memory reverted to the repast at Naïm; she recalled the floods of tears which had then cleansed her heart of its dark stains and the perfumes which she had shed, moved by a great love. Leaving Martha to care for the needs of their guests, she sped away in search of an alabaster vial filled with spikenard of exquisite purity; taking this in her hands and leaning over the couch on which Jesus rested, she shattered the fragile vessel. The fragrant stream poured over the head and feet of the Christ, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Turning on His arm, Jesus saw this woman lying at His feet as once before, and once more wiping them with her heavy locks. She was generously sacrificing, in His honour, the most precious possession of her home in Bethany. The Master understood her heart, and with silent approbation accepted Mary's act of adoration. But the Galileans, who were ranged round her, were indignant at seeing a treasure of so much value squandered in an instant, and one of them went so far as to openly utter his complaints against her — it was Judas Iskarioth.

"Could not this perfume have been sold for three hundred denarii,[15] and that sum had been given to the poor?"

"Now he said this, not that he cared so much for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the purse, he had charge of what was given for it." Then taking pattern from him the apostles began murmuring and repeated after him:

"What good is done by this waste?" [16]

Jesus reproved them.

"Why do you molest this woman?" He said. "For you will always have the poor with you, and when you will, you may do them good; but Me you have not always. As for her, so much as lay in her power, she hath done. She hath anointed My body beforehand for My burial."

"For My burial!" Mary realised then the truth which Jesus had already

14 John xii. 1–11. 15 [Nearly £10 or around $50.] 16 Matt. xxvi. 8–13; Mark xiv. 4–9.

three times revealed without being understood. More detached from the world than the apostles, and faithfully meditating upon the word of God, she had had, all along, a foreboding of the Saviour's end, and fearing that after the execution His blood-stained body might be left without honour "she poured balm upon Him beforehand." [17] Jesus bade His disciples everywhere publish Mary's deed.

"Of a truth, I say to you wherever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that which she has now done shall be told in memory of her."

[17] Mark xiv. 8.

BOOK SIXTH

HOLY WEEK

His Testimony of Himself

But He held His peace, and answered nothing.
Again the High-Priest asked Him and said to Him:
"Art Thou THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE BLESSED GOD?" And Jesus said unto him: "I am . . ." (Saint Mark, xiv. 61, 62).

CHAPTER I

A TRIUMPH OF JESUS

I. The Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem

John xi. 55–57, xii. 12–19; Mark xi. 1–11; Luke xix. 29–44, xxi. 37–38; Matt. xxi. 1–11

The Sanhedrin councillors had indeed compelled Jesus to fly from the Holy City, but they had not been able to blot out either the memory of His prodigies, or the authority of His language, or His name now famous throughout the length and breadth of Judea. While the Lord retired to spend His last few days in the Desert of Ephrem, very many Jews had gone up to the Temple in order to purify themselves before the Passover, and ever since their arrival they had been on the lookout for Jesus.[1] Their disappointment was lively on learning that He was no longer to be seen in Jerusalem, and that no one knew where He was.

In the porches, where the numerous ablutions and sacrifices necessitated long hours of standing about for these crowds of visitors, the only topic of discussion was the young prophet.

"What do you think?" they asked among themselves; "is it really true that He will not come?"

The councillors could overhear them speaking such words, could note the agitation of the first comers, and so must have congratulated themselves for having avoided the disturbances with which the festival was threatened, by thus getting rid of Jesus.

Their satisfaction was destined to be of short duration; for just six days before the Pasch, news reached their ears that the Saviour was approaching. The Sabbath prevented the people from hurrying out immediately from the town, but as soon as sunset signalled the end of the hallowed repose, many went out as far as Bethany. "They went thither, not only for the sake of Jesus, but for Lazarus also," [2] bent upon seeing this man once dead but now called back from the tomb. They gazed at him, were thrilled at the thought, and, finally, over-

1 John xi. 55–57. 2 John xii. 9–11.

borne by the power of Jesus' words, great numbers reentered Jerusalem, that same night, believing in the Saviour. Now among them were certain princes of the people, a fact which was exceedingly irritating to the excited members of the Sanhedrin.[3] The pontiffs especially, Sadducees for the most part, with no belief in the resurrection of the dead, were indignant that these nobles should be the cause of such a commotion. To their way of thinking, there was only one means of putting an end to the thing, and that was to kill the resuscitated man; this they resolved to do. But other cares weighed upon their minds, for now the rumour came (as already noised about in Bethany) that on the following day Jesus would enter the town. This news stirred up the entire populace, and all were making preparations to receive the Lord.

And accordingly, on the morrow, Jesus quitted the home of His friends to make His way Jerusalemward. He did not follow the usual highroad for caravans, but took the footpath, which crosses over the ridge connecting the Mount of Olives with Bethany. On passing out from under the long rows of palm trees which shade the village streets, there, just a little to His right, among the stony fields planted here and there with figtrees, the Saviour came in sight of Bethphagë (The House of Figs) surrounded by vineyards bearing a plentiful load of fruit.

Bringing the company about Him to a halt, Jesus sent two disciples on ahead. "Go into yonder village lying before us," He said.[4] "Upon your entrance you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, on which no man has ever yet mounted. Loose them and bring them to me. And if any one say to you, 'What are you doing?' say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and straightway he will let them go."

Everything took place as Jesus had foretold them; in a byway of the town they found a she ass, tied with her foal outside a gateway; and they unfastened them.

"What are you doing?" inquired some of the bystanders; whereupon they made answer just as the Lord had commanded them, and they let them go.

The apostles were impatiently awaiting their return; since now, for the first time, they beheld the Master making ready something which might be likened to a triumph, by preparing to mount the very animal of old devoted to the service of the royal house of Israel, the ass of eastern lands, of solemn gait and noble carriage. Jewish traditions had proclaimed that the Messiah would choose no other equipage on the day of His manifestation.

"And so," thought they, "at last the hour has come when the Master, after so long persisting in concealing Himself, will appear and establish His kingdom."

The delight and enthusiasm of the Galileans was so great that they tore off their mantles [5] and with them decked the ass as richly as they might; then making Jesus sit thereon, they thronged about Him with shouts of great joy. "They knew not," adds Saint John,[6] "the mystery contained in that which they were doing, but after Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that all these things

3 John xii. 48.
4 Matt. xxi. 2.
5 Mark xi. 7.
6 John xii. 16.

had been written of Him, and that they had fulfilled them." For it was long ago recorded, in the words of Zachary: [7]

"Rejoice greatly, thou daughter of Sion! Lift up a shout of gladness, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King cometh to thee: lowly and gentle, He bringeth thee salvation; poor, He rideth upon an ass and upon an ass's colt."

Meanwhile the retinue was advancing toward Jerusalem — Lazarus and the apostles nearest to the Lord's side, while the ass walked slowly alongside her foal. The multitude, hastening out from Bethany, shared the disciples' wild transports. Some cast their garments on the ground, to beautify the road before Him; others, stripping the fig and the olive trees of their leafy boughs, covered the way with green branches; all vied with one another in celebrating the wondrous deeds of the Christ, and Lazarus whom He had brought back alive from the tomb.

The route along which Jesus was advancing climbs over the crest of the Mount of Olives and speedily reaches its summit. From this point the Holy City suddenly rises in full view, its snowy ramparts towering over the dark ravines. Surprising as this scene is, even nowadays, to the traveller who climbs up this way from the Jordan, the spectacle was still more thrilling then, when in gazing upon Jerusalem they beheld one of the wonders of the Oriental world. Girdled with towers and battlements, crowned with palaces, the brilliant town reached out to the east and to the west, as if bent upon marshalling all her splendours before the beholder. In a southerly direction especially, when the sunlight would beat upon the white marbles and golden roofs of the Temple, the dazzled sight was unable to endure such a blaze of fire. So soon as this beloved vision unrolled itself before them, the apostles burst forth into songs of triumph: [8]

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed be the King of Israel,
Who cometh in the name of the Lord,
and blessed be the kingdom
of our Father David, which is come!
Hosanna, peace, glory
in the highest of the Heavens!"

Amid these cries of gladness Jesus alone was silent. He had stopped and was looking down upon the city wherein He was about to die. At last Sion had heaped up the full measure of ungratefulness, and the Saviour wept aloud over her.

"If thou hadst known," He mourned, "if thou hadst known — if only in this day which is still granted thee — that which might bring thee peace! But now all this is hidden from thine eyes. There will come a time when thine enemies shall compass thee about with trenches, and shut thee up, and straiten thee on every side, and shall destroy thee and thy children, all beaten down to

7 Matt. xxi. 5; Zac. ix. 9. 8 Matt. xxi. 9; Luke xix. 38; Mark xi. 10.

the ground in thy midst, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou hast not known the time wherein God hath visited thee."

No one else beside Jesus foresaw this catastrophe at that moment. His disciples indeed saw Him weeping, they heard His predictions, and felt a momentary thrill of disquiet, but the impression was effaced shortly. So many times had the Lord's brow grown sad, and His tears had flowed freely before them so often that they no longer felt much amazement at this spectacle!

Meanwhile joyous acclamations, reechoing from afar, had published on every hand the progress of the Son of David. And now, from the houses down in the valley and from the pilgrims' tents, pitched in every available spot in that neighbourhood, there came out a great multitude to meet Him, advancing, having all palm branches in their hands. Then straightway the two great companies joined forces and together descended to Jerusalem — one throng going before the Master, the other following after, all waving their green branches and filling the air with hosannas.[9]

"Hosanna!" they cried, while at every step the concourse swelled in number; loud plaudits, shouts of praise, triumphal chants, nothing was wanting which could lend majesty to this long-looked-for entry of their King.

Some of the Pharisees took alarm at all this.[10] For who would be able to set any bounds to this emotion of the people? Would the Romans look with a favourable eye upon this public proclamation of a Messiah, Son of David — a royalty which certainly promised nothing better than new and interminable seditions? However, as they dared venture nothing openly against these crowds now enraptured with great joy, they only managed to approach Jesus.

"Master," they said, "restrain your disciples."

"If they hold their peace," responded Jesus, "the very stones will cry out!"

Then He entered into the city. Here all was excitement.

"Who is this?" asked some; and those around them were crying:

"'Tis Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth!" [11]

The while "all this great multitude with Him gave testimony that He it was who had recalled Lazarus from the grave and raised him from the dead. It was for this that they flocked about Him, because they heard that He had wrought that miracle." [12]

Then indeed the Pharisees began to say to each other —

"You see, we are gaining nothing. All the world is running after Him!"

In this royal state the Saviour was conducted the length of Jerusalem as far as the Mountain of the Temple; there, doubtless, the great procession dispersed, for Jewish customs did not permit pilgrims to approach the Sanctuary in travelling attire, their feet stained with dust.

And so, entering alone into the House of God, Jesus found it once more just as it had been three years back. Again avarice and greed had broken the bounds of respect; cages of doves, herds of cattle and sheep, tables for money-changers, these all blocked up the porches, stretching along beneath the galleries

9 John xii. 12, 13; Mark xi. 9.
10 Luke xix. 39, 40.
11 Matt. xxi. 10, 11.
12 John xii. 17–19.

even to the confines of The Holy. Moreover, just at this moment the marketing seemed to wax more shrill and tumultuous than ever, since somewhere about the tenth day of Nisan the lamb had to be selected, so that every one was hurrying to buy the Paschal victim.

Jesus "scanned it all and on all sides." But He did nothing further on this day; for evening was drawing on, and He must needs make haste to depart from the city. In fact the Sanhedrin people, who were the more infuriated at losing Him as they saw He was gaining greater power daily, now dogged His every step. Obliged to smother their hatred during this triumphal day, they looked to find facilities for avenging themselves upon Him, come nightfall. In the midst of the sleeping city nothing could be easier than suddenly to seize the Nazarene. Jesus foresaw the danger, and with His apostles withdrew in the direction of Bethany.

Did He go as far as that village? We fancy not; for on this night as on the three following the Saviour would no longer have been safe in Lazarus' house, marked out as it was for the watchful spies. Wandering over the lonely and desolate sides of the Mount of Olives He made His bed upon the bare ground;[13] surrounded by His disciples. According to His own words the Son of Man had no longer "where to lay His head."

II. Holy Monday

Mark xi. 12–19; Matt. xxi. 12–19; Luke xix. 45–48; John xii. 20–50

On the morrow, during the early dawn, Jesus left the neighbourhood of Bethany and returned with His disciples to Jerusalem; [14] in that out of the way region He had not been able to procure even the little food He required, and now He felt the pangs of hunger on the road. The fields through which they were passing albeit a sorry enough landscape in our times, were then covered with trees, especially figtrees, which bordered the highways. The Saviour noticed one standing alone [15] fully leaved-out; He stepped nearer and looked for figs on its branches, but in vain. Then said the Lord:

"Henceforth may never fruit be found upon thee!"

And from that moment the figtree began to wither away.

Surely a strange anathema this, if we consider it as merely affecting a tree, incapable of meriting praise or blame; but a terrible judgment for the hypocrites, for whom this figtree was the figure, most of all terrible for the Jewish people who, while boasting of their laws and their ceremonies, used these outward signs only to hide the hollow insincerity of their righteousness. This death-blow is the only one dealt by the Saviour's merciful hands; indeed it was only wrung from his heart during the last days of His stay among them in the hope of striking their stubborn souls with a holy fear of God; and even here the tender mercies of His heart warded off the blow, moving Him still to spare mankind, and in their stead simply sacrifice an insensible object of His own handiwork.

13 Matt. xxi. 17. 14 Matt. xxi. 18. 15 Matt. xxi. 19.

The Master hardly halted long enough to launch this malediction, for a pressing duty was urging Him onward to Jerusalem. Sorely indignant at the profanations which on the evening before had met His sight, He had resolved to once more raise His arm in judgment against those who had polluted the Temple. Although it was an early hour in the morning He found the courts already crowded with traffickers and littered over with beasts.[16] Doubtless with blows from a thong, as He had done once before,[17] so on this occasion did He beat the buyers and sellers before Him, overturning the money tables, together with the stands of the dove venders.

"It is written, 'My House is a House of Prayer,' " He cried, "and you have made it a den of thieves!"

Trembling before Him they all took to flight; soon Jesus remained sole master in the sanctuary He had purified. "Nor would He so much as suffer a man to pass through the Temple with an unhallowed vessel." [18] Then, while those Jews He had just now expelled made shift to conceal their confusion in the outskirts of the Temple, the blind folk and cripples came hurrying to Him and He healed them. The multitude flocked about Him to hear His words, and were filled with wondering delight.

A few moments had sufficed to change the aspect of God's holy hill; whereupon, in place of the noisy tumult, there fell a great calm, like the spirit of recollection, over the courts. Even the children about the Temple were awe-stricken at the stillness; but then, recalling last night's triumph, forthwith they began to reenact the victorious chants which had then greeted the Christ.

"Hosanna!" sang those little voices, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" [19]

Their childish homage angered the enemies of the Lord; they were all there, high-priests, scribes, and chief magistrates of the people, all watching Him with envious looks. At sight of these young servants of God, brought up by them, and now hymning the praises of the Nazarene, they could contain themselves no longer.

"Do you hear what these are saying?" they cried.

"Ay," replied the Master, "have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast brought forth a perfect praise?' "

After this manner Jesus passed the day wherein, fulfilling Malachy's prediction; [20] He had appeared in the Temple, therein to exercise dominion. Struck with what they had seen and heard, certain Greeks,[21] who at this time happened to be in the Gentiles' porches, approached Philip and made this request:

"Sir, we desire to see Jesus."

Where did these men hail from, and what did they want of the Lord? There is a tradition which represents them as envoys from Abgar V., king of Edessa, who had lately been notified of the perils besetting Jesus in Judea, and desired to tender Him an asylum in his states; the Lord, they tell us, recompensed this prince by healing him of his leprosy, and sent him a message which is still to be found in the Annals of Armenia. Uncertain as these facts seem,

16 Matt. xxi. 12, 13.
17 John ii. 15.
18 Mark xi. 16.
19 Matt. xxi. 15, 16.
20 Mal. iii. 1.
21 John xii. 20-36.

it is right to recall them here, for they show at least that antiquity regarded these strangers as pagans, come from a far away country.

As Philip, whose Greek name had attracted their attention, did not feel sure how to proceed in the matter, he addressed Andrew, who was from Bethsaïda like himself; the latter, who was of hardier character, bade him accompany him to the Saviour, and so together they repeated the demand of these unknown foreigners.

Evidently the Master had expected the coming of these Gentiles, for He answered immediately —

"The hour is come wherein the Son of Man is about to be glorified." [22]

Thus He indicated that His Realm was soon to be extended over the whole earth, and at the same time testified to His own great joy thereat. But, foreseeing also at what cost this conquest must be bought, He felt rising within His soul the horror of death. His fast approaching Passion now appalled Him.

"Now is My soul troubled. What shall I say?" [23] He cried, as though uncertain of Himself, and in His anguish of spirit He besought Heaven to deliver Him.

"Father, save Me from this hour!"

Yet at once, crushing down the weakness of the flesh —

"Nevertheless," He added, "I came for this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name."

Straightway a Voice came from on High that said:

"I have glorified It and I will glorify It again."

It was the Father, Who celebrated the triumph of His Son beforehand and did honour to Him, as formerly in the Jordan and again upon Mount Tabor.

This evidence of His Godhead was not comprehended then.

"'Twas thunder!" cried the crowds,[24] though others added:

"An angel spoke to Him."

"This Voice is not for Me, but for you," Jesus replied.

And He explained the mystery it foreshadowed: inasmuch as the world is judged and convicted of its sins by the Holy Spirit, Satan, the prince of the world, shall shortly be cast out. But as for the Christ, He shall be lifted up,[25] like the serpent in the wilderness; and then only shall He draw all men unto Him. "Now He said this to declare by what death He must die."

These lessons were far above the thoughts of the crowd; accordingly they would not hearken longer, but began to besiege the Master with questions. What did He mean by saying, "It is necessary that the Son of Man be lifted above the earth?" Did this signify the death of the cross? But then how could He call Himself the Son of Man, since this name was a title of the Messiah, and surely the psalmist had proclaimed that the reign of the Christ should be eternal? [26]

Without entering into any long disputes Jesus reminded His auditors that, for yet a little while, they had the light among them.

22 John xii. 23.
23 John xii. 27, 28.
24 John xii. 29–33.
25 Num. xxi. 9.
26 Ps. lxxxix.

"Believe in the Light," He added, "while still you possess it, in order that you may be the children of light." [27]

These were the words Jesus then spoke to the people, but what occurred afterward between Him and the Greeks? Saint John does not inform us; he is content to tell us simply that these visitors "were come up to worship at the feast." A heaven-sprung light, like that which had once illumined the minds of the Magi, at first had revealed to the newcomers the excellence of the Jewish Law; but once arrived in Jerusalem they could find therein nothing greater than Jesus, and, in all simplicity and singleness of heart, they turned to Him. The Eastern world had knelt and adored Him in His cradle; now the West, in the person of these Greeks, came to bow down and worship before His cross.

The interview between Jesus and the Gentiles is the last incident of the divine ministry recounted by Saint John. In closing his account of this period he stops to cast one sad backward glance at the scanty harvest which the Master had gathered as the fruit of all His mighty labours. His teaching, it is true, had compelled the admiration of many; even here and now His words could hold the multitude spellbound, howbeit, without working their conversion. Isaiah's oracle [28] was accomplished: for three full years Israel had now looked upon the Messiah without recognising Him, had hearkened without understanding, all the time hardening its heart, so that it could be neither healed nor be turned unto Him.

"Truly this was what the prophet had predicted when, after having beheld the glory of the Christ, he spoke those words concerning Him." [29] Amid this universal blindness a few princes of the people believed in Jesus, but even these durst not avow their faith for fear of being expelled from the synagogue. Repeating the evangelist's reproachful words, "the glory of men was dearer to them than the glory of God."

CHAPTER II

THE LAST DAY IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

I. Jesus and the Members of the Sanhedrin — Parables of the Vine-Dressers and the Wedding-Festival

Mark xi. 20–33, xii. 1–12; Matt. xxi. 20–46, xxii. 1–14; Luke xx. 1–19

The following morning, after spending this night, like the preceding one, without the city walls, Jesus returned for the last time to the Temple.[1] By the roadside still stood the figtree He had condemned when passing that way yesterday, now no longer arrayed in glistening foliage, but parched and dry, blasted to the root. Peter was the first to notice it.

"Master," he said, "look yonder! The figtree which you cursed has withered away."

27 John xii. 36.
28 Is. vi. 9.
29 John xii. 41.
1 Mark xi. 20–25.

The suddenness of this death so astonished the apostles that they forgot the lesson which Jesus had drawn from the incident the day before, preoccupied as they were with the overwhelming effects of His lightest word. Accommodating Himself to their thoughts, the Lord now spoke to them of this attribute of omnipotence, and declared that they might rightfully assume a like power.

"Of a truth," He said, "if you have faith and waver not you shall not only cause a figtree to wither away, but you shall say to this mountain, 'Uproot thyself, and cast thyself into the sea!' Immediately it shall be done."

The apostles, who had been so amazed at the wonder He had worked, were even more astounded to hear Him say that they might do as much. In their surprise they stood staring at the Mount of Olives, whither the Lord had just pointed, their minds bewildered at the notion of stirring so huge a mass. Jesus pursued His thought further.

"All things which you shall ask in prayer do but believe and you shall receive them."

Surely this was to give the soul a partnership in the divine power. But the faith of which the Master is speaking here is worthless without charity, and this truth He inculcated by adding that no prayer is granted which does not spring from love and forgiveness of injuries.[2]

"And when you would betake yourselves to prayer, whatever you may have against any one forgive it him, in order that your Father Who is in Heaven may also pardon you your offences. And if you do not forgive him neither will your Father Who is in Heaven pardon you your offences."

Meanwhile, conversing in this manner, they had passed under the gates of Jerusalem and ascended to the Temple. The crowds had not yet gathered in any great number. Walking under the galleries Jesus was beginning His instructions to such as He found already assembled there, when a deputation approached Him.[3] It included, if not the whole Sanhedrin, at least representatives from its various divisions — pontiffs, scribes, and ancients of the people. Filled with wrath, as they watched the Galilean's triumphant reception during the last few days, they now came in person to question Him, making sure that their presence would overawe the multitude; and in fact the people at once fell to one side at their approach.

"By what authority," they demanded, "do you do these things? And who has given you this power" of instructing and exercising dominion in the Temple?

"I also will propose a question to you," said Jesus, "and, if you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I do these things. From whom was the baptism of John? From Heaven, or from men?"

The Sanhedrin delegation was disconcerted; for, with a word, the Saviour had reversed their respective rôles, and obliged His judges to defend themselves.

"Answer Me," He repeated.

But it was without avail. They saw only too well just what His question involved, for John had given testimony in the presence of all Judea that Jesus the Christ was still greater than he.

2 Mark xi. 25, 26. 3 Mark xi. 27–33.

"If we say: 'It was from Heaven,'" they muttered among themselves, "he will answer us: 'Why did you not believe him?' And if we say: 'It is from men,' the people will stone us." For all regarded John as a true prophet, and they would incur great danger by even contradicting his words; so then, dreading any uprising of the multitude, the Sanhedrin's emissaries were forced to acknowledge their defeat, saying:

"We know nothing about it." [4]

They knew nothing about it! they, the masters of Israel, who had arrogated to themselves the right of expounding everything, of judging all things, of alone being able to distinguish the inspired prophet from the seducer of the people — they could not tell what this man was whose voice had startled Judea, and attracted to the Jordan, not only the ignorant multitude, but the doctors of the Law and the great men of Jerusalem. They were so publicly put to confusion that Jesus was content to add:

"No more will I tell you by what authority I do these things"; and He turned away from them.

After having thus reduced the lawyers and doctors to silence Jesus continued to teach the people.[5]

"What think you of this?" He asked them. "A man had two sons, and coming to the first he said to him:

" 'My son, go work today in my vineyard.'

" 'I will not,' he answered; but afterwards, touched with repentance, he went.

"Coming to the second, he spoke to him in the same words.

" 'I go, sir,' this one answered, and went not.

"Which of the two did the will of his father?"

With one voice the crowd exclaimed:

"The first!"

Thereby they unwittingly condemned the Sanhedrin party, for it was to them that Jesus referred under the guise of this son, so ready with his lip service — too insincere to disobey openly, too corrupt either to will or to do what is right. Then He added that publicans and harlots should go before them into God's Kingdom. The latter indeed were converted by the power of John's words; whereas the princes of the people, on the contrary "had seen all that perfectness of righteousness which is of the Law that was in John, yet nothing about him had touched them or moved them to believe."

But what after all was this incredulity when compared with the crimes which they were even now meditating? In order to display its blackness Jesus brought forward another parable.[6] He described one of the vineyards which then covered the suburbs of Jerusalem. This one the master of the household has planted with his own hands, has encircled with a wall and bristling shrubs whereby to ward off the wild beasts; his zealous care has prompted him to have a tower built, and by night and by day a watchman keeps guard from this height; a huge basin, hollowed from the rock, receives the wine which the

[4] Luke xx. 3–7. [5] Matt. xxi. 28–32. [6] Matt. xxi. 33–46.

vine-dressers pour in purple streams from the press. Nothing is wanting to complete this cherished vineyard, and the Lord may well demand:

"What more ought I to have done that I have not done?" [7]

And, notwithstanding, when the vintage season came at last it was of no avail for him to send his servants the prophets to warn them that it was high time to render some fruits. The husbandmen laid hold upon these messengers, beat some, slew and stoned the rest. Others of his retainers sent in greater numbers suffered the same outrageous treatment at their hands.

What else was this but a history of these same Jews, of whom Saint Stephen could truly say:

"Which one of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? They have massacred them which proclaimed to you the coming of the Just One, of Whom you have been but now the betrayers and murderers." [8]

The rest of the parable still more plainly declared what the Sanhedrin was about to put into effect only three days later.

The master of the vineyard had an only son whom he loved much.[9]

"What shall I do?" he mused. "I will send them my beloved son; perchance when they see him they will have respect for him."

Then, when the husbandmen caught sight of him, they said among themselves:

"This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours!"

And laying hold on him, they dragged him outside the vineyard, and there they killed him.

"When, therefore, the master of the vineyard shall come what will he do to these vine-dressers?" demanded Jesus, and He looked fixedly at these members of the Sanhedrin.

But on their part the sole thought was to divert the attention of the multitude from themselves; accordingly, in order to forestall any such personal application, they stigmatised the crime in unmeasured terms.

"He will punish these wicked men in proportion to their wickedness," they said, "he will have them slain, and let out his vineyard to others." [10]

"God forbid!" [11] cried out the people, who comprehended that this vineyard was Israel, and now heard their leaders launching curses upon their own heads. But Jesus did but confirm the sentence which they now had uttered against themselves.

According to the psalmist's prophecy [12] the stone at first rejected by men for the foundation of God's Church was thereafter to become the mighty basework whereon Jews and Gentiles should together erect a new edifice. This corner-stone was Jesus, whose humble appearance had made Him a stumbling block to these masters of Israel. Woe unto them, for that they had fallen against this rock of offence, and were thereby broken in pieces! Yet, even now, there was space left them to retrieve their fall and rise once more; whereas, if they consummated their crime, the stone would crush them, grinding them into such

7 Is. v. 4.
8 Acts vii. 52.
9 Luke xx. 13–16.
10 Matt. xxi. 41.
11 Luke xx. 16.
12 Ps. cxvii. 22.

fine chaff that the lightest wind would sweep them from off the threshing-floor.

"The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you," said the Lord, "and given to a people who shall bring forth the fruits thereof." [13]

These last words of the Saviour left no room for misconception; "the princes of the priesthood and the Pharisees understood that He was speaking of them, and sought means to seize Him; but still they feared the people, who regarded Him as a prophet." Thus protected from their wrath, Jesus only answered them by forcing them to hear what should be the result of their plottings.

To this end He went on to repeat an illustration which He had used at other times, that of a marriage-banquet which the guests refused to attend.[14] But since the day when the Lord first presented this picture of their reprobation before the eyes of the Jews the aspect of affairs had altogether altered; the hatred, so long repressed, had broken its bonds; the Pharisees, who had formerly invited the Christ to sit at table with them, only gathered about Him here in Jerusalem in the hope of apprehending Him and putting Him to death.

These deplorable circumstances are all reflected in the details of the Second Wedding Feast. For this time the scene is one of imposing richness; it is no longer a private individual who bids them to a dinner — now we have a king celebrating the nuptials of his son. While those invited to the first entertainment excused themselves courteously, these who are called to the second shamefully maltreat the servants of the prince, while some proceed so far as to scourge and kill them. Such heinous crimes cry out for vengeance; accordingly, while only excluded from the banquet in the first parable, in the present one the guilty ingrates are punished rigorously. The king "despatches his armies, destroys the murderers, and sets fire to their city." A threatening prophecy indeed; one, alas! which the Jews did not comprehend even when Jerusalem lay in ashes at their feet.

Turning away from these reprobates, Jesus spoke of the other guests whom the apostles, His servants, were soon to usher into the Church; for He had commanded them "to gather in all that they should find, good or evil," in order to fill up the banquet hall. But it would not be enough for a man to have been called to the feast-making with Jesus in order to make him really worthy of such high honour. Indeed it would be with them as when "the king, having gone in to see the guests, perceives a man present who has not on a wedding-garment. Whereupon he saith to him:

" 'Friend, how did you enter here without having put on marriage raiment?'

"And he had nothing to answer.

"Then saith he to his servants:

" 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness!'

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus could add nothing to this parable but that one cry of warning so often repeated by him:

"Many are called, but few chosen!"

This He exclaimed now, no longer with the hope of alarming the Jews, but

13 Matt. xxi. 43–46. 14 Matt. xxii. 1–14.

thinking more of His disciples, since even in their ranks and at His Last Supper this saying would find its fulfilment.

II. Cæsar's Denarius

Mark xii. 13–17; Matt. xxii. 15–22; Luke xx. 20–26

The Sanhedrin's embassy had not lingered to hear the end of this parable; they had withdrawn, despairing of conquering the Christ by their own efforts, but more than ever ardently bent upon arraying other enemies against Him. They proceeded at once to take counsel, and, as their fear of the Nazarene outweighed every other feeling, they decided to renew the alliance heretofore made in Galilee, and accordingly courted the cooperation of such Herodians as they encountered in the Temple.[15] Intense as was the aversion usually shown by the Pharisees for these courtiers of the Roman power, they did not scruple at this juncture to make them the instrument of their wily designs.

Now the plan in view was to ask Jesus some question the answer to which, however it might be stated, should involve His ruin. If put to Him by the zealots of the Law any such insidious demand would be likely to awaken the suspicions of the Christ, and by this time His foes knew Him well enough to expect that, with a word, He would snap the snares wherewith they wished to entangle Him. But, on the contrary, when conversing with the Herodians, was there not good reason to hope that the young rabbi, no longer on His guard, would fall into the trap? However, dreading lest these courtiers should become engaged in any discussion with Him (for thus, as they were unaccustomed to religious controversies, their new allies might be easily confounded), the Sanhedrin at the same time commissioned to attend them some of their own disciples who were not so well known as the head men of the Synagogue, but were none the less experts in guile. The part the Herodians were to play in this odious comedy was to counterfeit the actions of honest, upright men, coming forward as if anxious to know the truth, and so lie in wait for an opportune instant to surprise the Lord.

At the propitious season (so it seemed) the Herodians probably pretended to be engaged in an argument among themselves; then approached Jesus, praying that he would arbitrate between them.[16]

"Master," they began, with great demonstrations of reverence, "we know that you are true-spoken, and that you do not put yourself out for any one, whoever he may be; for you have no respect for the person of men, but teach the way of God in all sincerity. Is it lawful for us to pay tribute to Cæsar or not?"

It seemed impossible for Jesus to escape them this time. To condemn the tribute would be to run the risk of incurring the vengeance of Rome; to account it legitimate would be to infuriate the Jews, who would construe it as a bit of flattery intended to conciliate these Gentiles. Clearly seeing the ambush, the Master turned toward the scribes.

15 Matt. xxii. 15–22. 16 Matt. xxii. 16; Luke xx. 21.

"Hypocrites," He said, "why do you tempt Me? Bring me the coin with which you pay the tribute."

Not one among the zealots of the Law could kèep in his purse a piece of metal stamped with idolatrous emblems; it was necessary, therefore, to procure one from the neighbouring money-changers, or from some one in the crowd. It so fell out that the piece presented to the Lord was not the peculiar coin which the Romans had authorised for Judea — which bore the name without the image of the Emperor — but a real Roman denarius. On one side Jesus displayed to the Pharisees the figure of Tiberius with the exergue: TIBERIUS CÆSAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS.

"Whose is this image and this inscription?" the Lord demanded of them.

"Cæsar's," they said.

This answer contained their condemnation, for, following the teaching of their foremost rabbis, to accept the money of a sovereign was to acknowledge his power. Now the Pharisees made use of Cæsar's money in all matters of contract and commerce. By what right, after reaping the advantages of imperial protection, could they refuse to meet the common cost, and to pay what they owe according to strict justice?

"Render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's," added Jesus, "and to God that which is God's." [17]

This decision determined what falls to Cæsar's share and what is God's. To the princes of the earth belong obedience and tribute; the soul belongs to God.

This left the Pharisees hopeless of either ensnaring the Christ in His talk or exciting the hatred of the mob against Him; they retired in confusion. Three days later they recalled this scene in Pilate's Pretorium, but only to travesty His words by their calumny:

"We found this fellow," they then said, "forbidding the people to pay tribute to Cæsar." [18]

III. JESUS AND THE SADDUCEES — THE GREAT COMMANDMENT — THE CHRIST THE SON OF DAVID

Mark xii. 18–37; Matt. xxii. 23–46; Luke xx. 27–45

This new defeat so discouraged the Sanhedrin that a majority of its members forthwith renounced the struggle. Some, nevertheless, made of more obstinate stuff, wished to try if they could not get better success.[19] They belonged to that sect of Sadducees who made themselves conspicuous among the Jews by their epicurean tenets and their contempt for the traditions. Although thus far they had disdained to meddle much with the Nazarene, leaving to the Pharisees the task of defending their observances which He condemned, yet, during these last few days, they had begun to fear lest some new uprising should come of this to trouble their peace with Rome. Even at this moment it would seem that it was not so much hatred which set them against the Christ as it was their own curiosity, along with a certain ambition to succeed where their rivals had

17 Matt. xxii. 21. 18 Luke xxiii. 2. 19 Mark xii. 18–27.

lately been worsted. They counted upon confounding Him with one of the objections they had raised against the resurrection of the body — one which to them seemed unanswerable.

Approaching the Saviour with every token of consideration —

"Master," they began, "Moses said: [20] 'If any one die without any children, let his brother marry his wife and raise up children to his brother.' Now there were with us seven brothers, and the first having married, died, and, as he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. In like manner the second and the third, and so on to the seventh. And after all the others, the wife dies also. In the Resurrection, to which one of the seven shall she be as wife, for such she had been unto them all?"

This tale, invented to suit their purpose, seemed pregnant with weighty matter to men who could conceive of no life nor any happiness outside and beyond the senses. They ridiculed the Pharisees' decision, that the first of the seven husbands would take back his wife, and therefrom took occasion to conclude that all things die with the body.

How infinitely higher was the reply of Jesus! For an instant, He flung open Heaven's gates and let them contemplate, what their dull hearts had never dreamed — the life of the blessed.

"In this life," He said,[21] "men take unto themselves wives, and women take unto themselves husbands; but amongst those that are judged worthy of the life to come and of being raised from the dead, it shall not be thus. They all shall be immortal, like unto the angels, children of God, children of the Resurrection." Born again into the incorruptible, these elect, like the angels, shall know no need of preserving their race by generations of time or by mortal marriage, for nothing shall perish any more, neither anything of the body, nor anything that is of the soul, but "God shall be all in all." [22]

These words showed the different tone which Jesus assumed with the Sadducees from that with which He treated the Pharisees. He knew that there was more self-conceit than malice in the queries of His new opponents; furthermore, taking compassion upon the blindness which led them to decry the possibility of a supernatural world, He pointed out the twofold cause of their error: this, He said, was because they misunderstood the power of God, Who, out of His love for mankind, can do and has done things far above the reach of our reason; it was also because they had as yet but poorly understood the scriptures, and had degraded them to the level of their own carnal minds. How came it that they had not read that the dead rise again, even as Moses had revealed to them long ago? Jesus intentionally omitted the prophets, who in the eyes of the Sadducees had not the same authority as the Law, but simply appealed to their great law-giver, as witness of Jehovah and sovereign arbitrator in all cases of doctrine.

"As to whether the dead rise again, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage of the Bush,[23] how God said to him: 'I am the God of Abraham,

20 Deut. xxv. 5–10.
21 Luke xx. 34.
22 Cor. xv. 28.
23 Exod. iii. 6.

the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob'?" If these Patriarchs had been nought but a heap of poor remains, enclosed in their lonely tombs, Jehovah would not have deigned to take this title and call Himself the God of a handful of cold dust. Therefore something of these men must have outlasted their death and thus still remains in the sight of the eternal; "for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Then, extending to all humanity what He had said of the first fathers of Israel —

"All," added the Master, "are living unto God. And therefore you do greatly deceive yourselves," He concluded, addressing the Sadducees.[24]

The people, who had followed this new debate, stood speechless with wonder at such power; some Doctors of the Law loudly declared their delight,[25] and one of them, desiring to be better informed [26] as to the School of the Christ, approached nearer and put this question to Him:

"Master, which is the first of all the commandments?"

This, indeed, was one of the questions which occupied every thoughtful mind in these times, disturbed as they were by the futile discussions of the Synagogue. In their worship of the Law the masters of Israel had really rendered the moral law an issueless labyrinth, accumulating precept upon precept without end, concerning its every word. For some, the commandments of Tradition even outweighed those of Moses; for others, the one thing essential was scrupulously to follow the Pharisaic "customs." Accordingly, this scribe asked Jesus to pronounce between them.

The response of the Master did not leave them long in doubt. He pointed to the legend graven upon the phylacteries of His hearers: each of them, in fact, contained that Prayer, repeated twice a day by pious Israelites, which commenced with the Hebrew word: *Shema*, Hearken — "Hearken, O Israel, the Lord thy God is the only God, And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

"Lo! the first Commandment," [27] said the Saviour, "and the second, which is like unto it, is this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

We should have to be living, like the Jews of that day, in the midst of the clouds accumulated by the Rabbis, to appreciate what a holy, beneficent light this speech seemed to shed upon their overflowing hearts. The simplest minds among them easily saw its truth; in two words it expressed the entire Law, or rather it reduced it to one single duty; love — to love God, above all things, and the neighbour for God's dear sake and in His sight. The Lord did not condemn the ignorant and weak to any irksome toil; He did not even exact of them that they should search the scriptures. For mankind this is the whole Law and the prophets, that they love God and their fellow man.

Enraptured with a doctrine which confirmed all that he had been able to descry in the Holy Books, the scribe testified openly to his delight.

"Master," [28] he cried, "You have well said!"

[24] Mark xii. 27; Matt. xxii. 32.
[25] Luke xx. 39.
[26] Mark xii. 28–34.
[27] Mark xii. 29, 30.
[28] Mark xii. 32.

And one by one he repeated the Saviour's words:

"Truly God is One, and there is none other besides Him! . . . He must be loved with all our heart, with all our intelligence, with all our whole soul, and with all our strength. . . To love our neighbour as ourself is more than all holocausts and burnt sacrifices."

These words of Osee,[29] connected in this way with those of the Christ, show what pious heedfulness the scribe had brought to the study of sacred literature. Jesus was touched at such tokens of earnestness. He praised the wisdom of his reply and encouraged him to take the final steps which yet lay between him and the perfect light.

"You are not far," He told him, "from the Heavenly Kingdom."

This conversation reached the ears of the Pharisees, for now, more than ever agitated, after the failure of their emissaries, they had gathered together and were inspecting with an anxious eye this man whom they durst no longer openly affront.

Jesus was well aware of their presence, and this time without waiting for them to cross-question Him, He addressed His words to them.[30]

"What think you of the Christ?" He asked them; "whose Son is He?"

"David's," they answered.

"How then," replied Jesus, "did David, divinely inspired,[31] call Him his Lord?

> 'The Lord said unto my Lord:
> Sit Thou at my right hand,
> until I reduce Thy foes as a footstool unto Thy feet.'

"If David calls Him his Lord, how then is He is Son?"

They could not answer this question without acknowledging the true origin of Jesus; David's Son, according to the flesh, He was still his Lord and Master, by eternal generation; yet now passion blinded their minds, and they remained silent while that "the people heard Him gladly." [32] After the controversies of this morning no one dared question the Christ; they had discovered at last that it would be far easier to destroy Him than to refute His teaching.

IV. Denunciation of the Pharisees

Matt. xxiii. 1–39; Mark xii. 38–40; Luke xx. 45–47

Jesus then turned toward the assembled crowds, and branding the hypocrisy of these the masters of Israel, He spoke their final condemnation:

"The scribes and the Pharisees," He said,[33] "are seated in the chair of Moses. Take heed then and do everything they shall say to you; but do not according to their works, for they say and do not. They bind together heavy and intolerable burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they will not move them with even their finger tips. They do all their works to the end that they may

29 Osee vi. 6.
30 Matt. xxii. 41–46.
31 Ps. cix. 1, 2.
32 Mark xii. 37; Matt. xxii. 46.
33 Matt. xxiii. 1–36.

be seen by men; to this end, they broaden their phylacteries and make themselves long fringes. They love the foremost places at the feasts, and the first seats in the synagogues, to have men salute them in the market squares, and to be called rabbis."

How far removed was this Judaic society, where such affectation and haughtiness prevailed, from the new rule now announced by Jesus! Here there is only one master, the Father, Who reigns in Heaven; one only doctor, the Christ; one only nation of brethren, among whom the greatest is he who makes himself servant of all, and where the first places are reserved for the humblest. And this was the perfection which the Pharisees spurned, that so they might entrench themselves in that hypocrisy which was now destroying them and their nation! Jesus would not suffer such depravity to go unrebuked, and, for eight distinct times, standing in the centre of the listening throngs, now dumb with astonishment, He launched His anathemas upon the princes and doctors of Israel:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who have taken the key of knowledge, and made use of it only to close the Kingdom of Heaven against men! You enter not yourselves, but hinder others from entering therein.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who devour the homes of widows, while you feign to pray the longer! Wherefore your judgment shall be but the more terrible.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you run over land and sea to make a single proselyte, and after he is become one you make him a son of Gehenna twofold worse than your selves!

"Woe to you, blind leaders, who say: 'If a man swear by the Temple, 'tis nothing; but if he swear by the gold of the Temple he is bound,' Blind and foolish folk! Which is of greater dignity, the gold, or the Temple which sanctifies the gold? . . . He who swears by the Temple swears by the Temple and Him that dwelleth therein.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithes upon a leaf of mint or anise or cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law; justice, mercy, good faith! [34] These things you ought to have done, and not to have left the others undone. Blind leaders, who strain your water that you may not swallow a gnat, and gulp down a camel!

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you are like to sepulchres o'erwhitened which appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead men's bones and every sort of rottenness! Even so you outwardly appear righteous in men's eyes, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who build the sepulchres of the prophets, and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say: "If we had lived in the time of our fathers, we would not have been accomplices with them in the blood of the prophets!" You, therefore, confess that you are the children of those who slew them. Fill up the measure of your fathers! Serpents, spawn of vipers, how will you escape the damnation of Gehenna? For lo!

[34] Mich. vi. 8.

now I send you prophets, wise men, doctors; some you will kill, others you will crucify; you will scourge them in your synagogues, you will persecute them from town to town, so that all the innocent blood shed upon earth may descend upon you, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachary, son of Barachias, whom you slew between the Temple and the Altar. I say unto you, of a truth, that all these things shall fall upon this present generation."

Vehement and fierce as these words sound, coming from the gentle Jesus, yet we know He rather bemoaned than cursed the faithlessness of Sion; and He manifests His feelings now more clearly by repeating that tender reproach which we once before heard from His lips:

"Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou who killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, even as a hen gathereth her little ones under her wings, and thou wouldst not! And behold your city shall be left desolate; for I say unto you, you shall not see Me henceforth till you shall say: 'Blessed be He Who cometh in the Name of the Lord!' " [35]

A mournful consolation this, for the nation of Deicides! Her last seed shall be converted only at the end of time, and then shall mourn the crime of their forefathers. This, then, was the only hope that Jesus could hold forth for the future to these Jews who now listened to Him, and who were to see, before their death, the Temple destroyed and their race scattered over the face of the globe.

CHAPTER III

THE LAST PROPHECIES

Mark xii. 41–44, xiii. 1–37, xiv. 1, 2, 10–11; Luke xxi. 1–36, xxii. 1–6; Matt. xxiv. 1–51, xxv. 1–46, xxvi. 1–5, 14–16.

Jesus was standing not far from the Sanctuary when He anathematised the Pharisees. Before descending from this upper terrace to the Gentiles' porches, He seated Himself in the court that was open to women, just over opposite the great coffers in which all offerings for the service of the Temple [1] were deposited. These three caskets, called *Schoferoth*, from their orifices, which were like the bell of a trumpet, were now surrounded by a knot of wealthy Jews, who were casting in their bountiful gifts with all the ostentatiousness imaginable. Just behind them a poor widow stole up to the box and dropped in her treasure — two small pieces worth the quarter of a Roman *as*.[2] "It was all her living," and Jesus knew it.

Forthwith, calling His disciples, He pointed out the humble soul to them.

"In truth," He said, "this poor widow has given more than all the others; for they, indeed, have put but a portion from their overabundance into the treas-

35 Matt. xxiii. 37–39.

1 Mark xii. 41–44.

2 [The *as* was worth three farthings. About one cent.]

ury, while she, out of her poverty, has given all that she had, even her whole living."

The Lord rose thereupon, and traversed the length of the porches.[3] His disciples, following after, were admiring the splendours of the Temple — all the more indeed, because Jesus had just now predicted its destruction.[4] Everything about this edifice enchanted their delighted eyes: mosaics, sculpturing, colonnades, gateways, all gaily bedight with precious metals. High above their heads rose the terraces, like a mountain of white marble, bearing on its brow the glittering façade of the sanctuary, resplendent with burnished gold.

One of the disciples stopped the Lord.

"Master," said he, "see! look at these stones! what a structure!" [5]

Others added that all this magnificence was the free gift of Israel, and each uttered his prayers for this national monument, one of the wonders of the world and the crowning honour of Judea. But the sentence was irrevocable. And now Jesus could only renew it in formal terms.

"Of all these great buildings," He said, "truly I tell you, there shall not remain one stone upon stone."

Such was the Saviour's farewell to the Temple. Thirty-five years later the Sanctuary crumbled into dust amid the flames, never again to tower over the town. All in vain did Julian the Apostate try to give the lie to those prophetic words of the Christ; from the ruins heaped there by the hand of God, flames shot forth and put the terrified workmen to flight. It was decreed that the ruin should remain complete, and that "the Holy Place should be left desolate for evermore." [6]

The little company left the Temple, crossed Kedron Gorge, then clambered up the Mount of Olives. Once on the top Jesus sat down, and before withdrawing farther toward Bethany, lingered to gaze at the town which He was never to enter again except to die. From this high point the whole scene of the Passion was now spread before His eyes: at His feet was Gethsemani; yonder, on Mount Sion, shone the palaces of the pontiffs and Herod's royal residence; facing Him and nearer the Temple stood Pilate's Pretorium, while afar off He could see Calvary and the tomb.

For a time the disciples respected the Master's silent reverie, but soon, disquieted by all they had just been hearing, some of them approached Him. These were Peter, James, John and Andrew; they wanted Him to explain to them personally the mystery contained in His final words.

"When shall all these things take place? What shall be the sign" of His Coming and the end of time? [7]

Jesus did not fully satisfy their queries, for the hour which they desired to know is still God's secret; but He unveiled so much of the future for their benefit as it was fitting for them to know — the approaching end of the Jewish world, and the more fearsome ending of the whole world. Indeed it was with design that the Lord united these two catastrophes. He knew that, for the

3 Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.
4 Matt. xxiii. 38.
5 Mark xiii. 1.
6 Matt. xxiii. 38.
7 Mark xiii. 3, 4.

apostles, imbued with Judaic prejudices, Jerusalem was everything and its ruin meant that of the universe. And, in consequence of this confusion, which continued to linger in their minds until after the actual destruction of the Holy City, the disciples remained in a state of continual expectation and watchfulness. And this was what Jesus wished; His prophecy was framed, not so much to reveal the things of the future as to give them a lesson; it was not meant in the least to satisfy a vain curiosity, nor, by a clear view of the future, to plunge the faithful into discouragement or presumption. Hence the care which the Lord took to envelop His thought in figurative language, linking events which had so many points in common, and dealing with acts even as one Who sees all things as eternally present, unto Whom a thousand years are as one day. Hence, too, the form in which the apostles afterwards recorded this prediction of the Master. Faithful interpreters of Jesus, they pointed out to their own disciples two horizons, one nigh at hand, the other stretching afar off to the end of the world, yet so alike in outline, in colour, and appearance, that the near landscape seems at first sight undistinguishable from the distant prospect.

It is especially in Saint Matthew and in Saint Mark that the prophecy of Jesus assumes this character; in Saint Luke, the two dread disasters can be more distinctly discerned, and the language of the Master which indicates this difference is here more carefully noted. Hence we prefer to follow the latter Witness, for he will enable us to determine best what is proper to each of the several events predicted.

Jesus revealed, first, what was to precede the fall of Jerusalem: [8] false prophets seducing Judea; a thousand scourges falling upon her, wars, plagues, famines, great earthquakes; then "the beginning of sorrows" — that is to say, the persecution of the new born Church, wherein the weakest shall succumb beneath their trials, one brother denouncing another, fathers betraying their children, horrible scandals, "charity frozen up in their hearts"; but all this time faith gaining ground even while evil increases, and "the Gospel, as preached throughout the world," made known unto all.[9] Such was to be the earliest age of the Church.

"Thereupon," continued Jesus,[10] "the end shall come. When you shall see the abomination and desolation in the Holy Place (Matthew and Mark), when you shall behold the hosts encompassing Jerusalem (Luke), know that its ruin is nigh. Then let them that are in Judea flee into the mountains, let not him who is on the housetop descend to take anything from his dwelling, and let not him who is in the field return in quest of his garment. Woe to the women with child and them that give suck in those days! Pray that your flight happen not during the winter nor on a Sabbath day, for there shall be then great affliction, such as, since the beginning of the world up to this present, hath never been nor ever shall be aught like unto it."

Every line of this prophecy was a vivid representation of the times which were to come. Never, indeed, was the spirit of seduction so potent with the

8 Luke xxi. 8–19; Matt. xxiv. 4–14. 9 Coloss. i. 6, 23; 2 Tim. iv. 17. 10 Luke xxi. 20–24; Matt. xxiv. 15–21; Mark xiii. 14–19.

people as when the siege of Jerusalem was close at hand. Now, at the call of Teudas, the populace rushed to the Jordan, carrying with them their goods fully persuaded that the stream would stand apart before their approach; again, the dismayed city saw thirty thousand Jews going up to the desert, led thither by a false prophet, and waiting upon the Mount of Olives for the walls to fall before them as of old the walls of Jericho had fallen. There, too, was Simon the Magician, multiplying his deceptive marvels; [11] while, over yonder, were to hang two sons of Judas the Gaulonite, crucified for having renewed the sedition set on foot by their father.

All these disturbances would soon shake the land of Judea. The rebellion continued under the rule of Caligula and Claudius, broke out openly in the reign of Nero, "after the rumours of war shall succeed war" [12] itself, together with such disasters that the Jew Josephus considers these the prelude of his country's destruction. Their wisest leaders were shaken; their towns were divided into two camps; peoples and cities flung themselves upon each other with fury; blood flowed in every land — in Gaul, under Vindex and Virginius, on the Danube, in Germany and Brittany, even to the frontiers of the Parthian Empire. Those who escaped the sword succumbed to other plagues: under Claudius the famine was a permanent evil; during one autumn season the pestilence reaped its harvest of thirty thousand inhabitants in Rome, and at the same time the earth trembled and quivered in every known region. Jerusalem was not the only spot disturbed: about Naples the soil had already begun to smoke, sending out low, sinister murmurings; Crete, Apamea, Laodicea, Rome itself trembled upon their great bases, while that queen of the world only profited by these dreadful warnings to unloose all her horrors upon the disciples of the Christ; some they crucified, others were cast before wild beasts; others saturated with pitch and resin, were set fire to during a summer's evening festival, and like living torches illuminated the gardens of Nero. Surely it seemed as if, according to the Master's prediction, an implacable hatred had moved the whole human family to rise in arms against His disciples.

The fulfilment of the prophecy was not less literal as regards the ruin of Jerusalem. One of their own traditions, recorded by Josephus, foretold that the town would be devastated and the Temple burnt so soon as ever the Holy Place should be soiled by Jewish hands. "Although the zealots did not believe in this prophecy, they accomplished it," adds the historian.[13] Shortly after the investment of the city by Cestius, the Temple became their citadel and the seat of their tyranny. Not content with filling the courts with combats and bloodshed, they mimicked the sacred functions, and drew lots for a sovereign pontiff. Chance chose for them a countryman, not even of the tribe of Levi, this fellow they invested with the ephod, and, before the eyes of the weeping priests, forced him to go through the sacred rites.[14]

Thus was "the abomination of desolation" introduced into the Holy Place. At this unmistakable token the disciples took to flight, before John of Giskala

11 Acts viii. 9, 24.
12 Matt. xxiv. 6.
13 Josephus.
14 Josephus.

closed the gates of Jerusalem, and the robber hordes, camping round about, began to massacre the fugitives before Titus, wheeling up his troops in haste, had hedged the doomed city about, to make it the tomb of Judea. From their hiding places over beyond Jordan they beheld afar off "the great wrath" [15] falling upon Jerusalem, and in the frightful sacking of the town saw the fulfilment of the desolation predicted by Jesus, "so great that never since the beginning of the world unto the present hath there ever been, nor ever shall be, aught like unto it." [16] In a season of seven months more than ten hundred thousand men perished and that which came not "under the edge of the sword was led away captive by all the nations." "Not a man would have been saved if the days "of the siege" had not been shortened; this was done for love of the elect," and under circumstances which clearly betrayed the hand of God. In fact, their preparations for the defence were neglected, their provisions were destroyed, and the arrival of the Romans was so unlooked for that the Jews forthwith abandoned a part of their defences. Taking Titus' own avowal, God Himself made war on the side of the besiegers and beat back the Jews from their impregnable ramparts.

According to this description, borrowed from profane annals, it is evident that not one detail in the Master's Prophecy remained without its actual fulfilment. To this He added that Jerusalem should be trampled under foot by the Gentiles even until the time of the nations be accomplished; [17] thereby foretelling what we have witnessed for now eighteen centuries — that all people shall successively enter the Church; and then only, when the salvation of the Gentiles is consummated shall the remnant of Israel be saved in their turn.

Thereafter shall come that end of the world here predicted by Jesus, [18] when the gray old earth's enticements have worked their last charms, and the stars are veiled from sight, men pining away with anguish at the clamour of the sea and its hoary floods; the powers of heaven shaken from their spheres; the Cross, the sign of the Son of Man, appearing in the sky; the Christ Himself descending upon the clouds in great power and majesty; all humankind awakened by the angel's trumpeting; dark hosts of eagles, the avengers of God, falling upon the sinful world as upon an abandoned carcass; and all this vast scene of terror shall be enrolled before our sight more swiftly than the bright thunderbolt from Heaven.

After this manner shall come the last moments of the universe. Jesus indicated all the signs which are to proclaim its presence, as plainly "as the figtree's leafage marks the coming of the summer"; [19] but, far from fixing the day and the hour, He declared that neither the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, in so far as He is Man, knew aught thereof; it is to remain a secret with the Father. The Jewish race is not to end before these things happen, and as for the Christians, their first duty is to live in expectation of the Judgment — conceiving no anxiety at the thought, but with serene and confident glance scanning the horizon of time in readiness to receive these forerunners of redemption.

15 Luke xxi. 23.
16 Matt. xxiv. 21.
17 Luke xxi. 34.
18 Luke xxi. 25–33; Matt. xxiv. 23–35.
19 Luke xxi. 29, 30.

"Take heed," He charged them; [20] "watch and pray; for you know not when is the time. It shall be then even as when a man is about to make a far journey, and leaves the care of his household to his servants, appointing for each what he must do, and bidding the gatekeeper be vigilant. Watch ye, therefore, for you know not when the Master will come — if it shall be at even, or at midnight, whether at cock-crow, or in the morning — for fear lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And this which I say unto you, I say to all: 'Watch!' "

This, then, was the fruit which Christians must needs gather from the prophecy of Jesus. Therefore it was that He spoke so much at length of vigilance, multiplying comparisons and parables in order to better inculcate this first requisite.

"Those days shall be like unto the days of Noë, when all men were eating, drinking, marrying wives, and straightway the deluge swallowed them up," [21] "as the springe snaps upon the bird," or "as the lightning rends the thundercloud." [22] Besides these images, He repeated similitudes delivered in former times, but hitherto only as if to remind them that it was their duty to watch and see that His word bore fruit; one was the parable of a steward overtaken in his evil-doing, the other that of the talent concealed by an idle servant.[23] But none touched the apostles more keenly than the Parable of the Virgins, which He uttered now for the first time.[24]

It pictured the marriage merrymakings and the ten virgins, companions of the bride, marching in the nuptial procession. At eventide these girls betake themselves to the home of the betrothed maiden; but five of them are prudent, five foolish. Now the latter, seeing their lamps still burning, do not remember that they will shortly flicker and become exhausted, and so they neglect to procure their portion of oil. In the middle of the night the distant shout is heard:

"Behold the bridegroom! Go ye forth to greet him!"

The ten virgins rise up, and proceed to make ready their lamps.

"Give us of your oil," say the foolish to the wise, "because our lamps are gone out."

And the wise answer:

"For fear that there be not enough for us and for you, go rather to them that sell, and buy therefrom."

While they are gone away the bridegroom comes. Those that are ready go in with him to the marriage, and the door is shut. Not long after come the other virgins, saying likewise:

"Lord! Lord! open to us."

And he answered them:

"Of a truth, I say unto you, I know you not."

"Watch then," the Master concluded, "for you know neither the day nor the hour."

20 Mark xiii. 33–37.
21 Matt. xxiv. 37–39.
22 Luke xxi. 35; Matt. xxiv. 27.
23 Matt. xxiv. 43–51, xxv. 14–30.
24 Matt. xxv. 1–13.

Then reverting to the prophecy which He had thus interrupted, He completed it by setting before them the scene of the last Judgment.[25]

In the presence of the celestial King, seated upon the throne of His majesty and encircled by angels, all nations of earth shall be assembled together, and He shall separate them one from another, even as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats — the sheep on his right hand, the goats on his left. Then shall the former be gladdened by His loving words:

"Come, you blessed of My Father, come hither and possess the Kingdom which hath been prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

And even at the same moment His malediction shall fall upon the goats:

"Depart from Me, you cursed, into that everlasting fire which hath been prepared for the devil and his spirits."

Then shall there arise between Heaven and Earth a solemn converse. God Himself shall disclose the glory of His Elect.

"I was hungry," He shall tell them, "and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was homeless and you gave Me shelter; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; in prison and you came to Me."

Overwhelmed by such praises and feeling that grace alone has been all-powerful in them, the righteous, in their humility, shall cast about how to esteem this their great merit.

"Lord," they shall say, "when did we ever see Thee hungry, and when did we ever give Thee food?"

"Of a truth," saith the Great King, "each time that you did it unto one of the very least of My brethren you did it unto Me."

And the just shall go into eternal life and the damned into punishment eternal.

Thereupon Jesus brought his long discourse to a close.

"You know," He said, "that the Passover takes place in two days,[26] and that the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified."

By these words He recalled His disciples' minds to what was being plotted against Him at that very hour in Jerusalem. In fact the departure of the Christ had left the field free to His vanquished and humiliated foes; they could not wait for the morrow to deliberate upon their schemes of vengeance. Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, scribes, ancients of the people,[27] all were resolved that this audacious man, who had made an open show of their shame, and was a perpetual menace to their peaceful relations with Rome should be cut off from Israel.

To the south of Mount Sion rose a large palace, the residence of the high priests; it was there that the enemies of Jesus held their assembly and Caïphas presided over their deliberations. The Pharisees brought with them all their habitual fanaticism, the pontiffs evidenced their contempt for all belief in spiritual things, while Herod's courtiers only hoped to further their own political schemes. The resolution passed was worthy of such a council. Out of fear of the popu-

25 Matt. xxv. 31–46. 26 Matt. xxvi. 1. 27 Matt. xxvi. 3–5.

lace they decided to temporise until just after the festival ceremonies were completed, and then seizing the Christ of a sudden, to put Him to death, but an unforeseen incident altered these first plans and precipitated events.

Judas had not followed Jesus up the Mount of Olives; lingering in the porches he overheard a group of Temple guards [28] discussing how they might manage to arrest this troublesome reformer, Who was powerful enough to hold in check the princes of the people.

"What will you give me?" he asked them, "and I will deliver Him unto you?"

They recognised him as one of the Twelve who accompanied the Nazarene, and they at once proceeded to report this proposition to the Sanhedrin members.

The latter welcomed the idea with great joy. Judas, immediately introduced into their meeting, confirmed his offer, extending his hand to receive the wages of his crime. He was treated indeed like a common huckster, for the Jews, after much haggling over the sum, only allotted him thirty shekels,[29] which was but price of a slave. Pitiful as this sum seemed, the apostle seized it. From that moment, says Saint Luke,[30] "Satan entered into him." Two days later Judas betrayed his God.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST SUPPER

I. Judaic Ritual of the Passover

Before recounting the doings at that evening meal, when Jesus celebrated the Pasch for the last time, it is quite important to recall its symbolic rites; for the Saviour made such frequent allusions to them that His words scarcely can be comprehended by the reader who is not initiated into the customs of the Hebrew people.

"Israel's Great Festival" was now no longer distinguished by the simplicity of earlier ages. We should search in vain for the Jewish household, all standing, with staff in hand, loins girded and sandals upon their feet, eating in haste the lamb garnished with bitter herbs, and the unleavened bread. Had these olden customs been altered even before the captivity? Or did the change take place only during the Jew's sojourn in Babylon? This we do not know; still we cannot doubt but that the new schools of the scribes, which became so numerous after the return to Jerusalem, must have exercised as profound an influence upon the rubric of the Paschal Supper as they did upon very many other Mosaic institutions. Under colour of reviving ancient usages they really disfigured them, and transformed them into inflexible rules. It is to this narrow formalism, exemplified in the Talmud and its commentaries, that we must refer today for a representation of the Passover as Jesus celebrated it.

On the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan the different families gather

28 Luke xxii. 4. 29 [About $20.] 30 Luke xxii. 9.

together to partake of the legal repast. The lamb baked in the furnace must preserve a form whose prophetic significance was manifest. It was attached to two branches of pomegranate, whose wood is less sensitive than any other to the action of heat; one of the branches penetrated the whole length of the creature, while the other, shorter than the first, fixed the front feet, which were stretched out in form of a Cross. These preparations were the object of scrupulous precaution, for they must needs beware of breaking one of its bones; [1] the least infraction of this law was punished by forty blows from a thong.

At nightfall the guests, whose number varied from ten to twenty, bestowed themselves upon couches slightly raised from the floor, the left arm supported upon a cushion, the right hand free to reach the food. To lie at ease during their meal was the distinctive privilege of all freemen; hence it was fitting that upon the anniversary of that great deliverance Israel should comport itself as a people unenthralled by any servitude.

The father of the household first took up a cup of wine mingled with a little water.

"Blessed be the Lord," he said, "Who hath created the fruit of the vine!"

Whereupon each guest, in his turn drank from this cup. Undoubtedly this was the same cup which Saint Luke speaks of as blessed by Jesus at the beginning of the Last Supper.[2]

A basin full of water and a napkin were passed around the assembly immediately afterward, that all might purify their hands; the washing of the feet narrated by Saint John is probably connected with this rite. When these ablutions were completed each one took his place at the table among the rest of the guests.

The board was spread with sundry dishes; at one side of the lamb were set bitter herbs, such as cresses and parsley, in remembrance of the sorrows of Egypt; then the azyme bread, thin and tasteless, like the paste which the yeast had not time to leaven before the precipitate flight of Israel; one last symbolic dish completed the repast; it was called the Charoseth, a compound of various fruits — apples, figs, and citrons — cooked in vinegar; by the use of cinnamon and other spices they gave it a ruddy tint like that of bricks; this colour together with its long, flat shape, recalled to their minds the mortar pits of Phithom and Ramases. Often they added several viands prepared and blessed at the same time as the lamb; these were, according to the commandment set down in Deuteronomy,[3] a young kid or a sheep roasted, which later on became the Chagigah; but generally they reserved this sacrifice for the fifteenth of Nisa and the days following. The master of the house, as soon as the food was put before him, took the herbs, dipped them in the Charoseth, while thanking God for having created the good things of earth, whereupon all ate thereof a portion not less than the size of an olive.

A second cup was then poured out, and the youngest of the company requested the father of the family for an explanation of these rites. The latter, to lend a more solemn significance to his response, lifted up in succession before

1 Exod. xii. 46. 2 Luke xxii. 17. 3 Deut. xvi. 2.

the eyes of all the different dishes forming their repast, and while so doing recalled what memories of past times were attached to each — the lamb, immolated to turn away Heaven's anger, whereat the Angel of Death passed over Israel without striking their first-born; the bread of anguish, eaten during the terrors of their flight; [4] the herbs, bitter as the slavery from which they had come forth triumphant.

"And for such wonders as these," he added, "it behoveth us to praise and exalt Him Who hath changed our weeping into gladness, our darkness into light; unto Him alone doth it behove us to sing 'Alleluia!'"

Then at once the whole company intoned the Hallel: [5]

"Sing praises, O ye servants of Jehovah
praise ye the name of your God!
Blessed be the name of the Lord
from this time forth and forevermore.
From the rising unto the setting of the sun
the Lord's Name is to be praised!"

So they continued on to the end of the following Psalm, chanting their song of triumph over the deliverance out of Egypt:

"O Sea, wherefore didst thou flee away?
and thou, Jordan, wherefore turn backward?
Ye Mountains, wherefore skip like kids?
and you, little Hills, like young lambkins?
In the presence of the Lord, tremble O Earth
In the presence of the God of Jacob.
For He changeth the rocks into fountains,
and the stones into springs of living water!"

During these canticles of joy they drank the second cup. The father of the family then took the azyme cakes and broke them before blessing and distributing them. In order that all might recollect that this was the bread of sorrowfulness no one might eat more than a morsel, along with a few herbs and soaked in the Charoseth. Then came the time for the lamb; when once carved and distributed to each guest it must needs disappear entirely, and no other meats were served up thereafter.

Then the father of the household poured out a third cup — the Chalice of Benediction — and this probably was that which the Christ changed into the Blood Divine. So soon as ever it was drunk they intoned the final hymns of the Hallel, wherein their grateful hearts burst forth into transports of joy:

"Not unto us, Lord, not unto us,
unto Thy Name belongeth glory,
O source of mercy and truth!
Now let the nations come unto us, saying:
'Where is your God?'
Our God is in the heavens:
that which He willeth that doeth He.

. . .

4 Deut. xvi. 3. 5 Ps. cxii. cxviii.

Then what shall I render unto Jehovah
for all his benefits?
I will lift up this cup of salvation.
and I will invoke His Name.
Yea, I am Thy slave, Jehovah,
Thy slave and the son of Thine handmaid.
Thou hast broken my chains in pieces:
to Thee will I offer a sacrifice of praise,
praising I will call on the name of the Lord!"

Then appealing to the whole world, Israel, in a holy ecstasy, endeavours to entice them all unto the service of the true God:

"O all ye Peoples, praise ye Jehovah:
ye Nations exalt His Name!
For His love is mighty amongst us,
and the truth of Jehovah endureth forever!
Alleluia!"

A fourth cup hereupon passed from hand to hand and marked the end of the repast.

Such was the Jewish Passover when Jesus celebrated it for the last time. With this description before our minds it will be easy for us to supply what is omitted in the evangelist's narrative, while, too, by this means we may decipher the allusions and understand the transformation of this figurative rite into that holiest function of religious worship — the most Holy Mystery of the Mass.

II. The Feast of the Passover

Matt. xxvi. 17–25; Mark xiv. 12–21; Luke xvii. 7–18; John xiii. 1–22

All during Wednesday Jesus had not appeared either in the Temple or in Jerusalem. On the morning of Thursday the apostles inquired of Him whereabouts they were to eat the Paschal supper, for "they were now in the first day of Azymes." [6]

Leaving Judas unnoticed, though ordinarily he was the one entrusted with the care of their larder, the Saviour called Peter and John.[7]

"Go," He told them, "and prepare what is necessary."

"Where will you have us make it ready?" inquired the disciples; for they knew that Jerusalem was rife with danger for them.

"Go into the city," Jesus replied; [8] "as you are entering you shall meet a man carrying a jar of water; you will follow him, and on reaching the house whither he shall go you will say to the master of the dwelling:

" 'Lo, thus sayeth our Master: Mine hour is close at hand, and I am to keep the Pasch with My disciples at thine abode. Where is the room where I may eat the Passover?' Then he himself shall show you a large upper room, furnished with couches and arranged beforehand. There do you prepare all things needful."

Peter and John obeyed; at the city gates they met a man who was coming

6 Matt. xxvi. 17.
7 Luke xxii. 8.
8 Mark xiv. 13–16; Matt. xxvi. 18.

up with some water drawn from the fountain of Siloë, and following in his footsteps they found the householder described to them. It was some disciple of the Lord, hitherto unknown to the apostles. Finding Himself constrained to prepare for the event of the Passover, the Saviour had warned this friend to hold his residence in readiness for His coming.

Once consecrated by the Eucharistic sacrifice, this "Upper Chamber" was ever dear to the new-born Church, which found a first shelter under its roof. Here their resurrected Lord once more found His disciples assembled in the midst of their despondency; hither the apostles also betook themselves to await the Holy Spirit, and after Saint Peter had been delivered by the angel, he had no need to look elsewhere for his brethren at the hour when they were usually gathered together in prayer. Today the traveller coming toward Jerusalem from the south descries a minaret which still marks the location of that guest chamber. It towers over a vast hall which, although much altered during the Middle Ages, is still the same which Saint Cyril of Jerusalem venerated in the fourth century, and which Saint Epiphanius pointed out as one of the few edifices spared at the time of the demolishing of the city.

But in Jesus' time and on that day of the Pasch it was far from having any such splendours as the fanciful pictures of our artists have decorated it withal. What we now know of Jewish dwellings makes us imagine it as a room with white walls; in the centre stands a low table, embellished with bright colours and with one side left free for the servers, while along the others couches are arranged. This was the general disposition of the dining hall on the evening Jesus entered it. The Twelve followed [9] and took their places about Him. John, who lay at His right, only needed to turn His head, to rest it upon the Master's breast. Peter was near the beloved disciple, and Judas reposed not far from Jesus.

The hour was come, and the heart of Jesus was thrilled with gladness.

"With a great desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you," He said, "before I suffer." [10]

Nevertheless, to make the apostles comprehend that it was no figurative rite for which He had longed so keenly, but rather, indeed, the accomplishment of a real sacrifice in the Eucharist, He added:

"Of a truth, I say unto you: I will nevermore eat this Pasch until the Mystery thereof be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."

Meanwhile the cup which indicated the beginning of the repast had been prepared. Taking it from the hands of His disciples, Jesus pronounced over it the accustomed blessing,[11] moistened His lips therewith even as the master of the household was wont to do, then offered it to His disciples.

"Take and divide it among you," He said, "but as for Me, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God cometh."

Here Jesus was not so much speaking of the Eucharist as of the heavenly blessedness, and this fruit of the vine, which He must never more drink save

9 Matt. xxvi. 20. 10 Luke xxii. 15, 16. 11 Luke xxii. 17, 18.

in the heavens, was used for a figure of that felicity for which the Psalmist long since had sighed so longingly:

> Ah, how lovely is my chalice,
> which inebriateth my soul!" [12]

The thought of that eternal Paschaltide could not absorb the Saviour's mind so far as to make Him forget those He was to leave upon earth. "Knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to His Father,[13] having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" — loved them even to excess, and therefore taxed His almighty attributes for one last miracle of charity wherewith forevermore to gladden all human hearts. The circumstances surrounding the gift were most solemn. Saint John delights to recall every detail of the scene: the Paschal feast had commenced, Satan was there as master of Judas Iskarioth; high above that supper room Heaven opened for Jesus' vision; therein clearly He beheld "that all has been delivered into His hands by His Father"; "all," yes, all the blessed members of the Church marked with the seal of the elect; "knowing that He came forth from God and that He was returning unto God," there remained nothing now but to give mankind the uttermost token of His love. But first He desired to so humble Himself before them all as to show forth the infinite self-annihilation whereby He was made flesh, whereby He would likewise give Himself to be their meat and drink.

Just at the moment when the ritual of the sacred feast commanded the guests to purify their hands,[14] Jesus, rising from table, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded His loins; then, pouring out water into a basin, He made ready to wash the feet of His disciples, wiping them with the towel which served Him for a girdle.

Peter was the first to see the Master kneel down before him.

"What, Lord!" he exclaimed, "wouldst Thou wash my feet!"

"Thou knowest not at this time what I wish to do," replied the Saviour, "but thou shalt know shortly."

Thus He gave him to understand that this allusion was only a symbol — a figure of the redemption which washes away our sins. But Peter refused to see anything but the humiliation of his Master.

"Never, no, never," he repeated, "shalt Thou wash my feet."

To overcome this impetuous resistance, Jesus said to him:

"If I do not wash thee, thou shalt have no part with Me."

At once Peter comprehended all that this threat implied, and, unbounded as usual in his fervour —

"Lord," he cried, "not only my feet, but my hands and my head!"

Tempering the apostle's fiery spirit, Jesus said:

"They that come forth from this bath need but to wash the dust from their feet and they are pure from any stain."

12 Ps. xxii. 5. 13 John xiii. 1-3. 14 John xiii. 4-20.

So was it even now with the apostles. Their greater sins all washed away, they needed but to cleanse the lighter spots from off their souls, before approaching the table of their Lord. Nevertheless, there was one impure spirit among them, and, without mentioning Judas by name, Jesus forewarned him, by a hidden allusion, that He was aware of his crime.

"You are pure, but not all."

Notwithstanding this the traitor did not take the alarm; he permitted the Lord to approach him, pour water upon his feet, and press them between His hands, while he still remained unmoved.

The ablution finished, Jesus resumed His garments and again took His place on the couch.

"Do you know," He asked, "what I have now done for you? You call Me 'Master,' 'Lord,' and you are right, for so I am. If then I have washed your feet, I, your Lord and your Master, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you."

"As I have done to you," said the Lord, not "that which I have done." Thus, in fact, it is not so much the action which we must copy, as it is the self-renunciation of Jesus. The washing of the feet, as a symbol of His mission, displays Him unto us just as He appeared upon earth, despoiled of His glory and clothed with the form of a servant, that so He might purify the souls of men. To deny one's self thus far is the law which the Christ left to His apostles. And truly, added He, I have good right to give this law; "for the servant is not above his master, neither is he that is sent greater than he that sendeth him. Blessed shall you be if you understand these things; most blessed if you do them!"

Yet all in the College of Apostles were not to know this gladness. Once more Jesus repeated that all were not clean, and the saying of Scripture was to be fulfilled:

> "He that eateth at table with Me,
> shall lift up his heel against Me."

Speaking in this way, the Lord made allusion to the crime of Achitophel, David's councillor, who was not afraid to involve himself in the revolt of Absalom; [15] for this sage of Israel had been his master's table companion many a time before that day when, with his plottings discovered and defeated, he went out and hanged himself in his despair. Jesus recalled this fact to the apostles' minds for fear lest the defection of one of their own number should, in after days, shake their faith.

"Even now I announce it unto you," He said, "ere ever the thing come to pass in order that you may know Who I am, when it shall be accomplished."

Jesus could not divert His mind from this treason. Dwelling longer upon the dignity which Judas once possessed but had now so degraded — a dignity so lofty "that to receive one of His apostles was to receive the Christ; thereby receiving the Father who hath sent Him" — "He was troubled in spirit" [16]

15 2 Kings xv. 12, 31, xvi. 15, 20–23, xvii. 1–23; Ps. xl.

16 John xiii. 20, 21.

and for the moment remained silent, as though He hesitated before lifting aside the veil from the future. But shortly He said aloud:

"Of a truth, ay, of a truth, one of you shall betray Me, and even now he eateth with Me." [17]

The astonished disciples looked from one to another, not knowing of whom He might be speaking, and in their grief each one began to ask —

"Is it I, Lord?"

Judas alone was silent.

"It is one of the Twelve," Jesus answered; "he that dippeth his hand into the dish with Me, that man shall betray Me."

Undoubtedly many of the disciples had touched the dish at that very moment; hence the traitor was only the more vaguely designated. Yet one last time the Master warned that guilty soul of what was to come, showing him the dark abyss ready to engulf him.

"The Son of Man indeed goeth," [18] He said, "according to that which is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed! It were better for that man never to have been born."

Terrified by these menacing words, the apostles durst no longer question the Saviour, but asked among themselves of whom He was speaking; and still no one thought of Judas. At last the traitor repeated after the others [19] —

"Is it I, Master?"

"Thou hast said it," responded Jesus; "thou art he."

This reply, spoken in a low tone, was heard by none but Judas, leaving him as stolid and impassive as ever. Henceforth nothing any more could touch him, his soul was steeled for the crime; and it was with the most absolute certainty of beholding His Body and His Blood profaned in His presence that Jesus took within His holy hands the bread of the Eucharist. Long after, when the Lord revealed to Saint Paul the circumstances of the Last Supper, He first reminded His minister of what took place on that same woeful night, that night of treason and betrayal; for it was "on the night in which He was betrayed He took bread." [20]

III. The Institution of the Eucharist

Matt. xxvi. 26–29; Mark xiv. 22–25; Luke xxii. 19–23; John xiii. 23–30

The meal was drawing to its close. "And whilst they were still eating, Jesus took one of the loaves of unleavened bread and having given thanks He blessed it." The ritual of the Passover ordained that all bread should be broken before it could be eaten. Therefore Jesus parted that which was in His hands and offered the fragments to the apostles.

"Take ye and eat," He said; "this is [21] My Body, which is given for you," broken for your sakes, bruised and beaten by the blows of men.

Deep silence ensued upon these words — the silence of awe and amazement

17 Mark xiv. 18.
18 Mark xiv. 21.
19 Matt. xxvi. 25.
20 1 Cor. xi. 23.
21 Luke xxii. 19.

doubtless, but also of humble and submissive faith; for every one there well remembered the promise made to them long since on the lakeside: "The bread which I shall give you shall be My Flesh, for the life of the world. My Flesh is truly meat and My Blood is truly drink." [22] And whether Judas secretly revived the murmurs then uttered by the people of Capharnaum, yet there was nothing of the sort now among the other disciples; thereafter for them there was to be no more room for doubt; and to them this saying of Jesus was neither a figure barren of meaning nor an obscure comparison. It declared that here, in their presence, under the appearances of bread, was the flesh of their God made Man.

The bread of azymes, broken and changed into the Body of Jesus, rested now on the dish upon the table. Each one received a portion, and so in this, the first of all Communions, side by side with the sacrilegious spirit were pure souls exulting in this chaste union, overflowing with the delights of its holy harmony. "In the raptures of human love, what mother, what lover knows not the impulse to consume, nay, to absorb, after any fashion whatsoever to be incorporate with the beloved? . . . As though by devouring the loved one it were possible to possess his soul and body, to feed thereon, to be one with him, to live in him. This is that fury of tenderness which can never be satiated by any human passion, but is, indeed, the prompting of truth and wisdom, in the love of Jesus: Take, eat! This is My Body; and by consuming satisfy thyself; it is not a morsel of My Body, that thou dost absorb, but even the whole." [23]

Wholly and entirely Jesus had given Himself for them, and to this He testified by adding at once, without waiting until the consecration of the Cup:

"Do this in remembrance of Me." [24]

But, nevertheless, it remained for Him to tender them a completer representation of His Death by showing them that, after His Body was immolated, His Blood must be shed. Mark in what manner He chose to do this.

The repast was concluded; the third cup [25] — "The Chalice of Benediction," which must be drunk before singing the final hymns — was now poured out. Jesus took it, blessed it, and presented it to the apostles.

"Drink ye all of this," He said; "this is My Blood, the Blood of the Sacrifice, which shall be shed for many in remission of sins," [26] words whose substance Saint Luke has reduced to those words: "This Cup is the New Testament in My Blood which shall be shed for you." [27]

Therefore within this cup there was a Blood which soon must gush forth to consummate the new Covenant. Full of these thoughts Jesus beheld nothing now but that fast approaching death, and found no words wherewith to consecrate this sacrificial wine better than the words of Moses, when He likewise sealed in blood God's alliance of ancient times! Yet at the same time the Lord offered unto His own, in this His Chalice, a source of eternal life.

"Of a truth, I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine until that day when

22 John vi. 52, 56.
23 Bossuet.
24 Luke xxii. 19.
25 Luke xxii. 20.
26 Matt. xxvi. 28.
27 Luke xxii. 20.

I shall drink it with you new in My Father's Kingdom.[28] But for you, as often as you drink thereof do it in remembrance of Me." [29]

As Jesus finished speaking these words he met the eyes of Judas.[30]

"Behold the hand of the traitor," He said, "who sitteth with me at table!"

Then condemning the sacrilegious act He repeated:

"The Son of Man goeth away according to the divine decrees; but woe to him by whom He is betrayed!"

At this anathema the apostles shuddered with alarm, asking anew which of their number was to commit this crime.

Now one of them, he whom Jesus loved, while leaning upon his Master's breast,[31] had tried to read the answer in His eyes. Peter remarked John's attitude, familiar as of old, and thought that he at least must know all — that, perchance, by some gesture or word he had rather divined than heard the name.

"Who is it?" he whispered.

But John was still as ignorant of the truth as he.

"Master," he asked, "who is it?"

"He to whom I shall reach the morsel of bread dipped in this dish," Jesus replied, and having moistened it, He gave it to Judas, son of Simon, the man from Kerioth. "And with the morsel of bread Satan entered into him."

"That which thou doest," Jesus said to him, "do quickly."

The apostles heard these last words; but as Judas kept the common purse, they believed that Jesus was telling him to "buy what we need for the feast, or to give certain alms to the poor." John alone understood what had taken place; he saw the traitor, straightway upon receiving the bread, rise up and at once disappear from the hall. "It was night," he adds. And Judas went forth to be lost within the blackness of an everlasting gloom.

IV. Peter's Fall Foretold

John xiii. 31–38; Luke xxii. 24–38

So soon as Judas was gone [32] Jesus had no further thought for anything but the salvation of the world, the glory which God would gain even from this awful act of treachery, and His Soul was fain to exult in the joy of this perfected work of redemption.

"Now is the Son of Man glorified," He said, "and God is glorified in Him; nor will He any longer delay to glorify Himself."

Though they could not wholly grasp the significance of these words the apostles felt that they presaged the death of their Master, and at the thought their sorrow was unrestrained, the while Jesus comforted them with a gentleness most like the tender talk of a mother.

"My little children," He called them, "I am to be with you for but a little longer. You shall seek Me, and even as I told the Jews that they could not

28 Matt. xxvi. 29.
29 1 Cor. xi. 25.
30 Luke xxii. 21–23.
31 John xiii. 23–30.
32 John xiii. 31–35.

go whither I am going, so I say to you now. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, that each of you be beloved by the others, even as I have loved you; by this all men shall know that you are My disciples, if you mutually love one another."

A divine lesson this, whose importance the apostles rightly esteemed when, in after days, rising above the Mosaic Law, they welcomed all mankind as their brethren, showed a greater love for them than for themselves, and in such God-like charity found a peace and gladness hitherto unknown on earth.

Jesus left His disciples to gather the meaning of this new law in silence; but Peter soon broke the thoughtful quiet.[33] In all that he had just heard one thing alone stood out sharply before his mind — the idea that the Master was about to separate Himself from their company.

"Lord," he said, "where art Thou going?"

"Whither I go," responded Jesus, "thou canst not follow Me now; later on thou shalt follow Me."

Those words unveiled the future before Peter's eyes — his fall in the time of headstrong self-confidence; his self-denial and his martyrdom in the days of his humility. But as yet he could not comprehend all this.

"And why cannot I follow Thee now?" he replied. "I will lay down my life for Thee."

"Thou wilt lay down thy life for Me!" answered Jesus. "Of a truth, yea, of a truth, I tell thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny Me thrice." Then once more the Lord was silent.

This prediction humbled Peter's spirit; he sunk back overcome, as though struck down from the lofty rank to which the Master had raised him. Thus, too, the other apostles understood this saying, for they begun immediately to ask which one of them should succeed to the primacy, of which Simon was no longer esteemed worthy.[34] This rivalry soon involved them in a dispute, and at the very table where He had but now united His apostles in blessed Communion Jesus must needs interpose so soon to curb their selfish ambitions.

"The kings of the nations," He began, "command them even as masters, and those that have the power over them wish to be called their benefactors. But for you do not likewise; let the greatest become the least, and let the first among you be the servant of all. For which is the greater, he that sitteth at table or he that serveth? Yet I have been among you even as a servant."

Evidently this allusion to the humility of which He had given them such an example hardly moved these carnal-minded men at all, for the Lord went on at once to set before their sight the recompenses assured to the companions of His trials. A Kingdom was prepared for them; in this Kingdom there would be much feasting, whereat all should eat and drink; there would be thrones likewise, where seated with Him they should judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

The apostles received these promises in silent delight. Peter listened with them, but still overwhelmed by the prediction of the Master. Jesus marked his sadness.

33 John xiii. 36–38. 34 Luke ii. 24–30.

"Simon, Simon," He said,[35] "Satan hath desired to sift thee as wheat is sifted. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. And do thou in thy turn confirm thy brethren."

The Lord spared nothing to revive the spirit of the prince of the apostles; not content with praying for him in a special manner He promised him an impregnable faith, so steadfast and constant that it would suffice to strengthen his brethren, and make him the infallible mouth-piece of truth. In return for such gifts of grace He only demanded that His servant should assume a humility commensurate with his unequalled greatness.

Once again Peter could not comprehend all this; he was only the more obstinate in his presumption, boasting of his courage, insisting that he was sure of himself.

"Master," he cried, "I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death."

Then once more Jesus foretold his fall.

"Peter," He said this time, by that symbolic name reminding him of the firmness which he was to look for without avail from him — "Peter, today even the cock shall not crow until thou hast said three times that thou knowest Me not."

But the chief of the apostles was not the only one thus threatened; the flock was to be scattered and bereft of their shepherd. Of this Jesus forewarned them now.

"When I sent you without sack, without scrip, without shoes," He said, "did you want for anything?"

"Nothing, Lord."

"But now whoever had a purse or scrip let him take them, and let him that hath naught sell all, even his garment, that he may buy a sword. For I say unto you, that which Israel hath foretold of the Messiah is now to be fulfilled in Me; He shall be reckoned in the ranks of the wicked." [36]

This was but meant as a warning to bid them be in readiness for a spiritual struggle, but the apostles understood it as referring to some pressing danger.

"Lord," they exclaimed, "see, we have here two swords."

Grieved to the heart at finding His disciples, just as formerly, ever prone to misunderstand His thought, Jesus put aside the swords.

"It is enough," He said.

And breaking off the theme of their converse He no longer endeavoured to do anything but fortify their souls against the future.

35 Luke ii. 31–38. 36 Is. liii. 12.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST DISCOURSES OF JESUS

I. The Discourse after the Last Supper

John xiv.; Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26

For the most part the early Christians probably had no knowledge of these incidents of the Paschal meal which we are about to narrate; but toward the close of the first century John Evangelist completed the testimony of his predecessors by relating the instructions given them after the Passover was eaten. To report them so that they should offer nothing obscure or difficult to our minds it would have been necessary to reproduce every detail in the scene, the speaking glance, the tender accents and telling gestures of the Master, which together often were sufficient to illuminate His obscurest thought. But aside from the impossibility of the pen ever satisfactorily reproducing human speech, Saint John was animated by a far different design. Here, as everywhere in his gospel, eagerly bent upon setting the Godhead of the Christ in a stronger light, he only remembers such sentences of the Master as go to establish this dogma, overlooking a thousand accessories which we should have rejoiced to know, but which he did not think proper either to his genius or to the end he had always in view. Perhaps, too, the divine lessons only lingered in his memory as pictures half blurred and dimmed by time. Very many details, all the less important lines indeed, had faded away; the painting lacked any effective master-plan by which the whole would be grouped massively and given a body; but despite this apparent confusion some larger outlines are still easily to be distinguished from the rest, and certain words of the Christ stand out in bright relief; these the beloved disciple has left to the Church, just as he was accustomed to meditate upon them continually after the death of the Master, and hence they are the more touching, and open up to our minds such "depths of loneliness as might well thrill us with sympathy."

The first of the conversations which he now records took place in the supper room.[1] The Lord, whose object it was to prepare His apostles for the events about to follow, now bade them feel no alarm nor trouble, but believe in God — to believe likewise in Him, for He was going to leave them now only that He might prepare a place among those innumerable mansions which await them in their Father's House.

"If it were not so," He added, "I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you. And when I shall have gone, and shall have prepared a place for you, I will return and I will take you to Myself, that there where I am you may be also. Now whither I go you know, and the way you know."

"Lord," said Thomas, "we do not know where You are going, and how should we know the way?"

1 John xiv. 1–17.

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," Jesus answered him. "No one cometh unto the Father but by Me. If you had known Me you would have known My Father also, but even already you do know Him and you have seen Him."

"Lord," replied Philip, ingenuously, "show us Thy Father and it is enough for us."

What did this apostle expect, his mind absorbed in dreams of Jewish glory? Some celestial apparition doubtless, some glimpse of Jehovah's footstool, sparkling with the flames of sapphire, some fiery vision which would crown their brows with a splendour like that which Moses wore returning from the mountain peak.[2] For all these three years, during which he had followed the footsteps of God's Son, Philip had not yet comprehended that the Christ was one with His Father.

This blindness wrung from the Saviour an exclamation of grief.

"So long a time have I been with you, and as yet thou dost not know Me! Philip, whoso seeth Me seeth My Father"; and He went on to show that His words and His deeds are so manifestly divine that they alone would reveal in him the Almighty's presence.

Then addressing them all He promised that He would not leave them orphans,[3] that He would return to them, and, through the Father, bestow the Holy Spirit upon them to be their aid. This Spirit of truth would remain forevermore in their midst, communicating unto them such mighty powers that they should do the same works as their Master, and greater works still, and thereafter everything that they should ask in His Name should be granted them. Moreover, He promised them that, after His Resurrection, they should live, like Him, with a life divine.

"I live and you shall live. In that same day you shall know that I am in My Father and you in Me and I in you."

The sole condition on which they were to receive these gifts of grace was that they observe the commandments of the Lord, and thereby testify their love for Him.

"For he who loveth Me," said Jesus, "shall be loved by My Father and I Myself will love Him, and I will manifest Myself unto him." [4]

Here one of the Twelve again interrupted the Lord; it was Judas (not the man from Kerioth, but Judas Lebbeus, a cousin of Jesus).

"Master," he asked, "what new thing is this now? How comes it that you will disclose yourself to us, and not to the world?"

Evidently a grandeur destitute of the pomp and circumstance which appeal to the senses did not satisfy the notion which Judas had conceived of the Messiah's coming; his fancy had pictured a Saviour robed in glory, the nations' awful judge, a king and a conqueror, whose empire should dazzle the wondering eyes of men.

Jesus did not stop to shatter these illusions, but preferred to pursue His thought, simply saying:

2 Exod. xxiv. 9, 10; xxxiv. 29. 3 John xiv. 18–21. 4 John xiv. 22–24.

"If any one loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him and We will come unto him, and will make Our abode in him."

Indeed this indwelling of God midmost His holy people was one of the wonders which were to mark the coming of the Messiah. The Jews had awaited this signal and, instead of the cloud which so long had overshadowed the Holy Place, they had always looked to see Jehovah Himself, appearing in His heavenly splendour to abide in their midst, according to the promise delivered by the mouth of Moses.[5] Jesus, giving this prophecy at last its true significance, revealed that God thus abideth only in the hearts of those who love Him, who, for their faithfulness, deserve that He should disclose Himself to them.

The Master, however, could hardly have hoped that His apostles would as yet understand such lofty truths as these, and, therefore, He added:

"I have told you these things while I was still with you, but the Holy Spirit, the comforter, whom My Father will send in My Name, will teach you all things and bring back all things to your minds which I have told you."

Now at last there was nothing more for the Saviour to do before separating Himself from His own, and accordingly this farewell fell from His lips: [6]

"I leave you My peace. Nor do I give you peace like that which the world giveth. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard that which I said to you: 'I go away,' but it is only that I may return unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice for that I go unto My Father, because My Father is greater than I," and because I go to find in Him the power divine which shall assure you of your triumph. "And now I tell you this before it come to pass, that you may believe when it shall come to pass. I have but a little longer wherein I may speak with you, for the Prince of this world draweth nigh."

It was Judas whom the Lord denounced in this manner. He beheld him, making his way toward that quiet upper chamber, now finally possessed and mastered by Satan.

"He cometh," exclaimed the Saviour, "the Prince of this world cometh, and notwithstanding he hath no power over Me! Yet this must be, that so the world may know that I love My Father, and that I do that which He commandeth Me."

Then rising, "Come!" He said to the apostles, "Arise, let us go hence!"

The final hymns of the Hallel were chanted, all standing; then Jesus, followed by His disciples, started out toward the city gates.

II. The Talk on the Way to Gethsemani

John xv., xvi.; Matt. xxvi. 31–35; Mark xiv. 27–31

Jesus conducted His little company in the direction of the garden of Gethsemani, where He was accustomed to pray. Starting from the supper room, which lay on the southern side of Sion, He must have taken the shortest road

5 Exod. xxv. 8; xxix. 45; Lev. xxxi. 11.

6 John xiv. 27-31.

to reach the Mount of Olives, and hence passed under one of the gates which stood open in the southern quarter of the town; from thence they could at once ascend Kedron valley. All along this wayside, which is not far from the "Virgin's Fountain" and that of Siloë, the neighbouring hill slopes of Mount Ophel were in those days covered with gardens, and at every step were to be seen those vineyards which inspired the Saviour with His last discourse to His disciples.

Once they had left the city gates behind them Jesus could taste the sweets of silence and solitude for a little longer; and so, upon the way of sorrows, He halted for a moment, standing still to look at one of these vineyards, to which He was fond of likening the Kingdom of Heaven.[7] At this season of the year the vines were still arrayed in their leafy dress; the branches, already pruned for the second time, were strewn about the ground, some dried by the sun and piled up ready to be burned, the remainder preserving some tokens of their lusty greenness. The moon, which was now high in the heavens, or at all events the bonfires, which were always lighted at the approach of harvest time,[8] shed a clear light over the country. Gazing at the vineyard, Jesus began to speak to His disciples:

"I am the true vine, My Father is the vine-dresser . . . you are the branches. Abide in Me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit except it be growing upon the stock, so neither can you bear fruit if you abide not in Me." [9]

Dwelling further upon this comparison, Jesus pointed to "the barren branches, cut off and thrown out of the vineyard, heaped in bundles for the fire and therein burning forevermore." But for "the branch that is laden with fruit," the heavenly vine-dresser prunes it, quickens it to sturdier life," purges it, "trims it" even of its flowers when the heavy blossoms exhaust the plant and consume the sweetness necessary for its fuller fruitage. Again Jesus conjured them to remain forever united to the parent-stem divine, His Holy Church, giving them the most vital reasons therefor: first of all, the glory which they would thus repay His loving Father; then the blessed assurance that all prayers, uttered in this unity of spirit, would be granted; and finally the joy they should taste in this dear and intimate communion with their Saviour.

So, too, He bade them love one another, after His example, even unto the dying for each other. This, indeed, was above all things "His Commandment," for "greater love no man can have than to give up his life to save his friends." Proclaiming this gracious message, the Saviour declared that He had now revealed unto His own all that He had learned of His Father; that He no longer treated them as servants, but as dear friends, as the chosen ones of God, His elect set in His vineyard to grow and bring forth fruit everlasting.

And yet, though the Christian must needs love all mankind as his brethren, his love must not look for any requital; for they shall be the object of never ending hatred from worldlings.[10] Jesus foretold the apostles that this hatred which, since His coming was robbed of its last excuse, would thenceforth fasten

7 Matt. xxi. 33; Mark xii. 1, &c.
8 Exod. xxii. 6.
9 John xv. 1–17.
10 John xv. 18–27.

itself upon all who bore His Name, and in them would wickedly pursue His Father and Himself.

"If the world hateth you, know that it first hated Me. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, and because I have chosen you out of the world's midst, therefore the world hateth you. Remember that what I said to you: 'The servant is not greater than his Master.' As they have persecuted Me, so they will persecute you; and they will keep your word," He concluded sorrowfully, "even as they have kept Mine!"

After having thus forearmed them against persecutions, Jesus disclosed something of the fierceness and fury of the future trials; [11] the hatred, born of hostile religions, more implacable than any other, madly bent upon exterminating them; the synagogues shut against them, all men believing that in compassing their destruction they would be offering an agreeable sacrifice to God; and these excesses were to be committed with all the blindness of fanaticism.

"I have told you these things," concluded the Master, "that when the hour is come you may remember that I have forewarned you of them. If I told you not from the beginning, it was because then I was still with you, but now I go away unto Him that sent Me."

Certainly this was not the first time Jesus had told His flock of their future persecutions, but never yet had He revealed that the whole world was to be arrayed against them; that not only the Gentiles, but the children of Israel, would hold them in abhorrence, and that it would be deemed an act of religion to put them to death. So overwhelmed with grief were they at this prediction that the Lord speedily changed the tenor of His conversation, to comfort and revive their souls.

"I go away," He repeated,[12] "and now none of you ask Me where I am going; but because I have said these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. And yet, in truth, I tell you it is good for you that I go away, for if I do not go, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you."

Then He explained the mission of this Divine Spirit, Who would come to "convince the world of sin, for that it had not believed in Jesus," and "to establish the justice" of that same Jesus, "Who is returned unto His Father," there to find in His bosom a glory, "such as the eye of man hath not conceived"; and "to confirm the judgment of the world, long since condemned in the person of Satan, its prince."

"I have still many things to say to you," added the Lord,[13] "but as yet you cannot bear them. Wherefore when the Spirit of Truth shall have come, He will teach you all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but He shall tell you whatsoever He shall hear, and future things He shall announce unto you. All whatsoever my Father hath, is Mine; therefore said I unto you that He taketh of Mine, and will announce unto you that which He shall take thereof." Words which, while they reveal something of the inner life of God, likewise set before

11 John xvi. 1-4. 12 John xvi. 5-11. 13 John xvi. 12-16.

our eyes the whole order of the Trinity, the distinction of the Persons, and their interior communications.

Jesus dwelt no longer upon such exalted truths, He was content to disclose but a few beams of the heavenly light, and then ended this long talk with reminding them that a time of trial, as well as a season of consolation, was near at hand:

"Yet a little while, and you shall no longer see Me; again a little while and you shall see Me, because I return unto My Father."

At this point, doubtless, He resumed the journey toward Gethsemani. But the apostles, following in His footsteps were absorbed in a great perplexity over these words He had just uttered.

"What does He mean to say?" they whispered among themselves:[14] " 'Yet a little while, and you shall no longer see Me; again a little while, and you shall see Me; and this, because I return unto My Father.' "

This "little while" puzzled and disconcerted them; and, indeed, how were they to foresee that the Cross of Jesus was to be His triumph? Wearied with fruitless conjecture, they approached the Master to question Him further: but He forestalled their words.

"You are asking yourselves," He said, "what this may mean: 'Yet a little while and you shall no longer see Me; a little while and you shall see Me.' Of a truth I say unto you, you shall moan and you shall weep for your part, but the world shall rejoice; you shall be sad, but your sadness shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but after that she has brought forth a son, she no longer remembereth her woes, because she hath brought forth a man-child into the world. And you likewise shall have sorrow, but I will see you again and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

Then, describing that gladness which was to spring up in their souls after His Resurrection, He revealed the perfectness of their joy in terms which seem to refer rather to the glorified hosts of Heaven than to men living on this earth of ours.

"In that day," He said,[15] "you shall no more question Me concerning anything. Of a truth, yea, of a truth I say, unto you, if you ask anything of My Father in My Name, He will give it to you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name: ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled."

This prayer in the Name of Jesus, though impossible before His glorification, was indeed one of the graces reserved for all Christian souls, who should hereafter own the sway of the Holy Spirit, and thus it would crown their gladness by giving them all power over the heart of God.

And after telling the apostles the meaning of that saying, "that they should see Jesus no more and a little after should see Him again," the Lord proceeded to explain what was implied in that "return unto His Father."[16]

"Hitherto," He said, "I have spoken to you using figures and parables. Lo!

14 John xvi. 17–22. 15 John xvi. 23, 24. 16 John xvi. 25–32.

I will no longer speak in this wise; but I will tell you openly of My Father."

This He did by repeating what He had taught so many, many times, that, though He had come as a Man upon earth, He nevertheless abode always, as God, in the Father's bosom, and that, having come forth from Him, He might no longer remain separated from Him. The risen Jesus would, therefore, resume the glory which is essential to Him whereby also He would draw humanity unto Himself, having reestablished it in the grace of God. And this reconciliation would be so complete that there would be no more need for Him to pray to His Father for them: the Father Himself loveth them, because they love the Christ and do believe "that He came out from God."

"I am come forth from My Father," Jesus concluded, "and am come into the world; but now I leave the world and I return unto My Father."

Whether or no the disciples comprehended these words more than imperfectly, their joy was great, however, at hearing the Master praise their faith. They believed that surely the time had come when all truth would be made self-manifest and certain.

"In this hour," they said, "Thou hast spoken plainly to us, and dost no longer discourse in proverbs. Now we know that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should question Thee; by this we do believe that Thou camest forth from God."

"Yes, you believe now," replied Jesus, sadly, knowing all that it had required to arouse a spark of faith within their breasts at this last moment, "but the time cometh, yea, is now come, when you shall be scattered each of you unto your own homes, and then you shall leave Me alone." But speaking these words with uplifted eyes His glance rested upon the mighty heavens. "Alone!" He said, as though replying to Himself, "no, never shall I be alone, because My Father is with Me." [17]

This prediction, to which Saint John devotes only a passing word, is recorded much more at length by the other witnesses. It was while they were on the road to Gethsemani, says Saint Matthew,[18] that Jesus addressed these words to the disciples accompanying Him.

"This night I shall be unto you all an occasion of scandal and stumbling, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.' [19] But after I shall be risen again I will go before you into Galilee."

Peter already oblivious of the denial whereof the Master only now had foretold him, straightway cried out:

"Even if all shall be scandalised because of Thee, yet never will I." [20]

One last time did Jesus warn him to beware of presumption.

"Of a truth I tell thee this: Today, yea, this very night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt have denied Me thrice."

Far from humbling himself, Peter continued his protestations, as if he would even belie the words of the living truth.

"Although I must needs die with Thee I will not deny Thee."

17 John xvi. 32.
18 Matt. xxvi. 31–35; Mark xiv. 27–31.
19 Zach. xiii. 7.
20 Matt. xxvi. 33–35; Mark xiv. 29–31.

And all the apostles, prompted by this sturdy example, reechoed his words.

Seeing that nothing could shake their eager self-confidence Jesus endeavoured at least to forearm them against the discouragement with which the knowledge of their own weakness would soon overwhelm them, and therefore He urged them, however lonely and forsaken they might seem in after days, to trust always in Him.

"I have told you these things that in Me you may find peace. In this world you will have great griefs; but be of good courage, I have vanquished the world." [21]

III. The Prayer of Jesus

John xvii.

Jesus and His apostles had now nearly arrived at the lower bridge over which the road to Gethsemani crosses Kedron. This was where the conversation took place which we have next to recall, for we see Jesus immediately after the prayer which followed it crossing the brook.[22] At this point the Valley grows narrower, makes a rapid descent between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives, and thereafter is nothing but an arid gorge. No rivulets dashed down upon this bed of rocks; only the waters of the Temple, stained with the blood of its victims, trickled down hither amidst the lonely tombs, which were as thickly crowded then as they are today all about this region. The tomb of Absalom, at which every passerby still hurls an avenging stone, recalled David fleeing from his rebellious son, and crossing the dark chasm at this very spot where Jesus now stood; here, too, after being dragged from the sanctuary, Athaliah was slain.[23] Kedron, the Valley of Shadows, had finally become a cesspool for the city, where the worshippers of Jehovah burned every impure thing which could possibly pollute the Temple; [24] an unhallowed ground fit only for nameless and dishonourable sepultures; a dank and dim ravine, the receptacle for carrion and ashes; the mighty field of death, as says the Prophet Jeremy.[25]

From out the darkness of this deep and gloomy gorge Jesus lifted His eyes to His Father on high, giving utterance to a prayer in which He reveals all the movements of His Soul as the hour of sacrifice draws nigh. In it He depicts Himself standing between that last Paschal meal and the final offering of Calvary, as a victim, made ready for the sacrificial knife; wherefore He offers Himself, His apostles, and all those who by faith are made one with Him in one common oblation to God.[26]

"Father, the hour is come: glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee, and that as Thou hast given Him power over all men He may give eternal life to those whom Thou hast given unto Him. Now this is eternal life, to know Thee, Who art the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast

21 John xvi. 33.
22 John xvii. 1.
23 2 Kings xv. 23; 4 Kings xi. 16.
24 2 Paral. xxix. 16, xxx. 14; 4 Kings xxiii. 4, 6, 12.
25 Jer. xxxi. 40.
26 John xvii. 1-5.

sent. I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now do Thou, O Father, glorify Me with the glory which I have had in Thee ere ever the world was."

Here Jesus ceased to pray for Himself. As their victim He had only to complete His sacrifice; but could He forget that all might not leave the land of sorrows with Him? His eyes fell again upon the apostles as He reminded the Father of all that they had grown to be through His loving care.[27]

"I have manifested Thy Name," He pleaded, "to the men whom Thou hast given Me by withdrawing them from the world. Thine they were, and unto Me Thou gavest them, and they have kept Thy word. Even now they know that everything Thou hast given Me cometh from Thee, because I have given them the words which Thou didst give Me, and they have received them; and they have known of a truth that I am come forth from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. It is for them that I pray. I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me, because they are thine, and because I am glorified in them (for all that is Mine is also Thine and all Thine is likewise Mine). And now I am no longer in the world, I come to Thee; but for them they are yet in the world. Holy Father preserve these forever faithful in confessing Thy Name, which Thou hast given unto Me" to reveal to them, "so that thus they may be one, even as We are one. While I was with them in the world I guarded them faithfully, united in that Name which Thou gavest Me. I have guarded them, and no one of them has perished, save only the child of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Now I come to Thee, and I say these things, being yet in the world, that they may have within them the fulness of My joy. I have given them My word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I also am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. Consecrate them unto" the preaching of "the truth, that truth which is Thy Word. As Thou hast sent Me into the world so I have sent them into the world, and for them do I sacrifice Myself, that so they may be consecrated" for the preaching "of the Truth."

Whereupon the Saviour in His prayer swept the wide limits of His whole Church,[28] beseeching three gifts of grace for her — unity in faith and love, the Eucharist, and the glory of Heaven.

"I pray not for them only," He said, "but for those also who, through their word, shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee; that they, likewise, may be one in Us, in order that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me; and the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them, that they may be one, even as We are one — I in them and Thou in Me — and that they may be made perfect in one; that thus the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

It was the Eucharist to which Jesus alluded in these mystical terms, and it

27 John xvii. 6–19. 28 John xvii. 20–26.

was His good pleasure that those who are given to Him to be His own should be likewise partakers of His blessedness.

"Father, I will that there where I am, there those whom Thou hast given Me may be also with Me, that so they may behold the glory Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the foundation of the world. Just Father, the world knew Thee not, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou didst send Me. I have made known Thy Name unto them, and I will still make it known unto them, that so the love wherewith Thou lovest Me may be in them and I in them."

There was now naught that Jesus could give them which He had not given them; accordingly, having ended His prayer, He crossed Brook Kedron.

BOOK SEVENTH

THE PASSION AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The Testimony of Man

Now the Centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: "Indeed this was THE SON OF GOD!" (Saint Matt. xxvii. 54).

CHAPTER I

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

John xviii. 1–13; Matt. xxvi. 36–56; Mark xiv. 32–52; Luke xxii. 39–53

On the further side of Kedron, at the foot of the hillside, there lies a garden overshadowed by olive trees, and called Gethsemani, because of an olive press which formerly stood there. Nothing disturbed the solitude of this region, where the Saviour was accustomed to pass the nighttime whenever He did not return to Bethany in the early evening.[1] Judas was well aware of this secluded retreat, for a few hours later he led the band sent in search of the Divine Master unhesitatingly in this direction.

Hardly had Jesus entered the garden when He felt the awful throes of an anguish, like the first icy chills of the death struggle.

"Sit ye here," He said to His disciples, "while I will go yonder and pray"[2] There is a rock still pointed out, near the gateway of the garden, where tradition says the apostles found a resting place.

The Saviour took with Him Peter, James, and John, to whom He had promised that they should drain the cup of His grief; so now He led them under the black shadows of the olive orchard into the dimmest corner of the garden. Never had His apostles seen Him plunged in such sadness as this; terror, dejection, something like a stupour, says Saint Mark, seized his soul. And here He stopped His companions.

"My Soul," He groaned, "is sorrowful even unto death! wait here, watch and pray!"

Then withdrawing from them about a stone's throw[3] He fell upon His knees, His head bowed down till His face pressed the ground, while He prayed that if it were possible this hour might pass from Him.

"Father, all things are possible to Thee; take away this cup from Me,"[4] this cup of anguish, wherein He tasted beforehand all the bitterness of His Passion. So greatly did Jesus suffer that He shrank from enduring any more as yet, and

1 John xviii. 2.
2 Matt. xxvi. 36, 37.
3 Luke xxii. 41.
4 Mark xiv. 35, 36.

so for a long while He remained motionless, only beseeching the Father to grant Him sufficient strength and comfort. And, at the last, His words were words of resignation.

"Let Thy will, not Mine, be done!"

Then He returned to the disciples, craving some relief for His trouble; yet it only resulted in making the sense of His loneliness and abandonment more vivid and overpowering. There was not one human heart to watch with Him or to take compassion on His anguish. Peter, the intrepid champion of a few hours back, James, despite all his sturdy courage, and John, the well-beloved, every one of them was sleeping, notwithstanding all the love they bore Him, Who was racked with anguish almost before their very eyes — Who had besought them not to leave Him alone, but to uphold and sustain Him by their presence!

Addressing the most presumptuous of those three:

"Simon," He said, "so thou sleepest! Couldst thou not then watch one hour with Me? Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." [5]

The disciples saw Him withdraw from them again, once more casting Himself down, and in the dust exhausting Himself in the throes of His awful agony, while His lips still murmured the same prayer as before.

"Father, if this chalice cannot pass except I drink it, Thy will be done." [6]

Soon weariness once more overweighted their eyelids, and returning Jesus found them for the second time asleep. "They knew not what to answer Him," says Saint Mark.[7] The Saviour left them for the last time; it was to engage in that mightiest combat of all, the one which Saint Luke has recounted.[8]

What transpired in that dread hour within the Soul of the Christ? Was hell let loose upon the Lamb who bore the sins of the world? Did it hope, with the weight of all wicked deeds, past and future, to crush this Jesus, before Whose eyes was now marshalled the whole empire of evil, far up and down the ages? But this is no place for such conjectures. All that we may know is that in this trial not only were the Saviour's eyes wet with bitter woe, but tears of blood poured from His limbs. "And, as He was torn with His agony, there came a sweat upon Him, like drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."

Jesus did but pray the more ardently, evermore repeating the same words:

"Father, if this chalice may not pass except I drink it, let Thy will be done!"

This blood, these tears, His suppliant cries, ascended unto God.[9] At the voice of the spotless victim of love Heaven, which had been closed against sin-stained humankind since Adam, now threw wide its gates, and an angel descended thence to strengthen and console the Saviour. And Jesus rose up, once again stronger than His sorrow, "knowing all things that were to come upon Him," [10] yet none the less calmly awaiting the hour of torture and death.

Then He returned to His slumbering disciples. They had failed in the duty

5 Mark xiv. 37, 38.
6 Matt. xxvi. 42.
7 Mark xvi. 40.
8 Luke xxii. 43, 44.
9 Hebr. v. 7.
10 John xviii. 4.

entrusted to them of watching beside their Master in His agony, and this their sole privilege was lost to them forever. But the Saviour addressed them in words wherein tenderness is marvellously mingled with reproachfulness.

"Sleep on now and take your rest";[11] there is no more time for watching with Me hereafter. Then, as tokens of the arrival of Judas began to break in upon His words —

"It is enough," He added; "the hour is come wherein the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of sinners; rise up, come! lo, he that will betray Me is at hand!"

Jesus was still speaking when at the foot of the garden appeared an armed band bearing swords and staves. It was a Roman tribune with his legionaries, accompanied by a crowd of Jews of every rank and condition, officers of the Sanhedrin, temple guards, the serving people of the high priests — a motley assemblage at whose head marched Judas, "one of the Twelve." Torches flared and lanterns glimmered in every direction over the heads of the multitude.

Arrived at Gethsemani they halted near the garden, to arrange measures. Judas reminded them that a kiss was the sign agreed upon to indicate the Saviour, whom they were forthwith to seize and hurry away — cautiously, however, for fear of His supernatural powers.

While they were thus lingering in consultation, of a sudden the Master appeared;[12] at sight of Him, Judas hesitated; all his plot seemed to fall to the ground.

"Whom do you seek?" said Jesus.

The apostle and those who like him knew the Saviour were silent and dumfounded at finding their purpose anticipated. But the rest, seeing Judas speechless and motionless, in the midst of them and perchance thinking that the newcomer was only some stranger, responded at once —

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"I am He," the Saviour said.

Terrified they one and all recoiled and fell at His feet.[13]

"Whom do you seek?" again Jesus demanded.

At last they knew Who He was, that stood before them; still they durst not say, "Thyself," but answered only —

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"I have already told you, it is I, Jesus of Nazareth."

For the second time the Christ delivers Himself into their hands by these words, but even now He does not forget His own:

"Then if you are seeking Me," He added, "let these go their way."

In the depth of His humiliations and in the clutches of His foes, He still decrees how far their violence may venture, and this limit they must needs respect. Thus was fulfilled the Saviour's promise to His flock, when He said, "Father, I have lost not one of them that Thou hast given Me."

But there must be an end to this paltering and hesitation; the soldiers and the

11 Matt. xxvi. 45, 46. 12 John xviii. 4. 13 John xviii. 6.

tribune, dismayed at what had just occurred, now looked at Judas, as if waiting for the covenanted signal. Hastily the traitor approached His Lord.

"Master, Master,[14] hail!" he said, and his lips touched the cheek of the Christ.

"Judas," the Saviour replied, "friend, is it for this that thou art here? to betray the Son of Man with a kiss!"

Immediately the soldiers came up and seized Jesus. The apostles were still around Him and holding their two swords drawn and ready; seeing what was about to happen, one of them cried —

"Master, shall we strike at them?"

At the same instant the blade in Simon's hand flashed in the torchlight, and glanced above the head of a servant of the high priest, named Malchus; swerving to one side, the fellow received the blow upon his right ear, which was thus cut away.[15]

Fierce feelings were beginning to surge in their hearts, but Jesus quelled the storm with a word.

"Suffer ye thus far!" He said, and perceiving that Malchus was bleeding, with His own hands, which though He was their captive were not yet bound, He touched the servant's ear and healed it.

Then turning toward Peter, Jesus rebuked him for thus disturbing His Passion and degrading the dignity of His estate to the likeness of some criminal, apprehended in an act of revolt.

"Return thy sword to its sheath, for whosoever taketh the sword shall perish by the sword." [16]

Then as His agony and the cup of anguish rushed back upon His mind —

"What! shall I not drink the chalice which My Father hath given Me to drink? Thinkest thou that I cannot pray unto Him, and presently He will send hither unto Me more than twelve legions of angels? Yet how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, wherein it says that even so it must needs be?"

Such abnegation as this confounded Peter; nevertheless he at least understood that, in this very hour of humiliation, the Saviour called God His Father and that, instead of the twelve trembling apostles, He might summon as many legions of angels to overwhelm His foes.

No longer hoping to fathom the Master's designs, he dropped back in silence.

Hereupon Jesus perceived coming toward them some members of the Sanhedrin. Among them were certain Temple officials, leading men of the priesthood, with some ancients of the people, who had followed after their satellites at a distance. Addressing them in a tone devoid of anger, Jesus protested against the violence of which He was the victim.[17]

"You are come out against Me as against a thief, to seize Me with swords and staves. I was every day in the midst of you, teaching in the Temple, and you did not hinder Me; but lo! this is your hour, and the powers of darkness."

14 Mark xiv. 45.

15 Luke xxii. 49; Matt. xxvi. 51; John xviii. 10.

16 Matt. xxvi. 52–54.

17 Luke xxii. 52, 53.

Thus Jesus declared, in the presence of His enemies, that they had been obliged to wait for the hour marked out by God wherein He should be apprehended.

"And all this," He said, "happeneth, that that which was written by the prophets may be accomplished."

Hearing these words, the disciples took to flight, and left the armed band to surround their Master unhindered. The soldiers with their tribune, together with the mass of Jews, all rushed upon Him, in order to see Him fast bound; for they still trembled before Him at whose least word they but just now had been dashed to earth. Forsaken by His own, Jesus was dragged and pushed along to Jerusalem. One young man alone [18] clung close about His footsteps; dwelling in Kedron valley doubtless and wakened by the uproar, he had had only time to throw a light mantle about him. His eagerness in following the Saviour gave rise to suspicions, and the guards made some effort to detain him, but he left his garment in their hands, and with naked limbs fled from them into the shadows of the night.

CHAPTER II

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

I. Jesus Before Annas

John xviii. 13, 14, 19–24; Luke xxii. 54; Mark xiv. 53

From Gethsemani, the road leading Sionwards crosses the Brook, then winding its way among the tombs at the base of Mount Moriah, finally scales the steep ascent of Ophel and conducts the traveller into the city by one of its southern gates. The soldiers followed this route in order to bring Jesus to the palace where dwelt the two high priests, Caïphas and Annas.

We have explained elsewhere the part played by the latter personage at this period; how, when deposed by Valerius Gratus, he nevertheless managed to preserve an actual preeminence in public affairs, succeeded in keeping the sovereign priesthood in his family, and in the eyes of his countrymen always remained the only legitimate pontiff. In fact the Gospel shows him received with every honour by the Sanhedrin, the first to be made cognizant of the accusation and arrest of Jesus, in contravention of the rights of Caïphas, his son-in-law and the high priest put over them by Rome. As, in all probability, the two pontiffs occupied separate wings of the same palace, there was nothing to betray this sharp double play on the part of the Jews, and indeed it only would have been necessary, in order to conduct Jesus from Annas to Caïphas, that they should lead Him across the court which lay between their respective residences.

[18] Mark xiv. 51, 52.

Thus, then, the Saviour was brought, in the first place, into the presence of Annas; [1] and he, in order to give the council time to assemble, questioned Him at some length "as to His disciples and concerning His doctrine." The very order of these questions indicates the spirit which dictated them. It is easy to see that, in the eyes of the high priest, the main object in view was not so much to give judgment touching a system of teaching, as it was to discover and frustrate a plot. He treated the much talked of "Kingdom" of Jesus as one of those visionary movements which were forever agitating the East at this period, especially Judea — and thus, by linking the adventurers participating in it under the bonds of secretly cherished hopes, had kept the country continually involved in the dangers of a new uprising against Rome. And it was for this reason they desired to find some of His accomplices, that they might extort from their confessions a condemnation of the Nazarene, and so overwhelm Him with one well aimed blow.

It was not meet that the Christ should assume this character of a conspirator before the world. Without making any answer as to His disciples, He rose straightway to a plane of thought of which Annas had little conception.

"I have spoken publicly," He said, "I have taught always in the synagogues and the Temple, whither the Jews resort; and I have said nothing in private. Why question Me? Ask those who have heard Me as to what I have said to them. They know what I have taught them."

By its bold inversions, its repetition of words, the original text alone can portray the power of these few sentences; showing how Jesus withdrew the pontiff's mind from every foreign object, to fasten it solely and singly upon His Divine Person. "It is I, and I alone," He tells them, "Whom it behooves you to know. My doctrine is — Myself. And of Myself have I spoken to the world, freely, without any dissimulation, Myself — this everywhere and at all times, in the synagogues, beneath the Temple-porches, everywhere where Jews assemble, this has been My teaching. Why speak of secrecy? I have never concealed anything I said. Why then do you question Me? Do not examine My disciples, but ask those who have heard Me. See, even these men here," He added, pointing to those who surround Him — "they know what I have said."

These last words of Jesus amounted to a refusal to justify Himself. This the bystanders comprehended, and one of the officers of Annas' suite, standing almost beside the Saviour, gave Him a blow, saying at the same time —

"Is that the way you answer the high priest?"

"If I have spoken evil," Jesus was content to answer, "show what evil I have said; but if I have spoken well, why do you strike Me?"

Annas, unable to contend with this calm, broke off the examination at once and despatched Jesus bound to Caïphas,[2] thereby instructing him that he delivered Him over as a victim, not so much that He might be examined, but only in order to have Him condemned. A superfluous precaution indeed, for it

1 John xviii. 12–14, 19–24. 2 John xviii. 24.

was this very Caïphas, as Saint John reminds us, who had exclaimed, but a few days earlier:

"Is it not right that one man should die for the whole people?" [3]

II. Jesus Before Caïphas and the Sanhedrin

Matt. xxvi. 59–68; Mark xiv. 55–65

Jesus was brought away and introduced into the presence of the Sanhedrin over whose deliberations it would seem that Caïphas was presiding during this night session. Rightfully this function belonged to Rabban Gamaliel, who had held the presidency since the death of his father Simon; and without doubt he had been kept away designedly. A man of broader mind and sincerely attached to the doctrine of Hillel, his ancestor, like him he had broken clean away from the narrow and austere formalism of Shammaï and the scribes, while later on we even find him pleading the cause of the Christians.[4] Such a man was not likely to be invited to the condemnation of Jesus. Accordingly the high priest assumed the direction of the trial himself. And, further than this, it was no unusual thing for the pontiffs to reserve this right to themselves, especially in any cases where the worship of Jehovah was in question.

The gathering before which Jesus appeared was the High Court of Justice in Judea. In full conclave it numbered seventy-one members, but the presence of twenty-three was sufficient to constitute a tribunal and give authority to its decrees. The Nasi, or "Patriarch," of the Sanhedrin, seated upon a platform, presided over their deliberations; around him, upon cushions arranged in a semi-circle along the ground, were seated the other judges. The Nasi had, at his right hand, a vice-president who directed the debates, and close at hand the sages, who were the usual legal councillors of the court. At either extremity of this space were posted two secretaries, occupied in recording in order, one everything charged against the accused party, the other, anything favourable to his cause.

Besides these there were various subaltern officials who surrounded the accused, armed with ropes and thongs with which to bind or beat him at the first order from the court. Such was the general aspect of the tribunal before which Jesus was now conducted.

From the beginning it was easy to see just how far the prejudice entertained by the judges against their prisoner was likely to carry them. There is nothing to indicate that they in any way respected the rules of the Sanhedrin, which commanded that for capital offences everything in favour of the accused must be exhibited first. No counsel, not a single witness for the defence was engaged in this case. Then, too, the accusation was of a different tenor this time; it was no longer a question of some secret doctrines but of His public instructions and His blasphemies against religion.

As if in derision of the Lord's request that "they should interrogate His hear-

[3] John xviii. 14. [4] Acts v. 34–39.

ers," [5] the chief of the Sanhedrin replied by producing various suborned witnesses, who asserted that they had heard Him uttering scandalous sayings [6] — these were some of His expressions, either misunderstood or distorted, of which we find numerous examples in the Gospels.

The regular formalities were gone through for the benefit of these informers, the oath was proffered them and they listened to the solemn voice of the Nasi:

"Know ye, that the blood of the innocent man and of his posterity shall return upon your heads now and for evermore."

Nevertheless, determined as they were to utter their calumnies they were unable to concert upon all points; and before this tribunal, where they now appeared one after the other, their depositions did not agree. Thus Jesus had simply to listen in silence, and behold the artifices of His adversaries annul themselves.

But in the end two men testified that they had heard Jesus say, "I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and in three days rebuild it." This testimony Saint Mark reports under another form: [7]

"We have heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple, the handiwork of man, and in three days I will build another, which shall not be the handiwork of man.' "

Even upon this point they could not manage to agree.

The prosecution was falling to the ground amid all this contradictory evidence; moreover, the falsity of the whole thing was manifest, for it was in public and in the open courts of the Temple that Jesus had said: "Overthrow this Holy of Holies," as by your faithlessness and your crimes you are doing, and "in three days I will reerect it." And thereby, we must bear in mind, He referred to His Body, destined to become the Holy of Holies of a New Covenant to mankind.

Mighty in the testimony which the simple truth had tendered to His cause Jesus stood there silent and still, and let the confusion have free sway about Him. Caïphas realized how eloquently this silence spoke for the defence. Suddenly he stepped down from the judicial daïs and advanced into the centre of the hall, until he was face to face with the Prisoner.

"You answer nothing!" he said sharply. "What is all this they are testifying against you?" [8]

Still Jesus was silent.

The disconcerted pontiff perceived now that he must bring matters to an issue. Accordingly, thrusting aside technical shifts and captious questioning, he administered a solemn oath to Jesus which, according to the Law, obliged Him to make answer.[9]

"I adjure you, in the Name of the living God, tell us if you are the Son of God." [10]

5 John xviii. 21.
6 Matt. xxvi. 59–62.
7 Mark xiv. 58, 59.
8 Mark xiv. 60.
9 Lev. v. 1.
10 Matt. xxvi. 63.

Caïphas's language really anticipated his thought; he did not say: "Tell us if you pretend to be really the Son of God"; his words were "whether you are the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God."

"I am He," replied Jesus, and, with this declaration, He spoke some few words following upon the thought, of which the evangelist has preserved only this single noteworthy utterance:

"Moreover, I say unto you, one day you shall see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the majesty of God, and coming on the clouds of Heaven."

The Scribes could not fail to recognise how, in these words, there was a two-fold reference to the Prophecies of Scripture; on one hand, it recalled the Psalm [11] which foretold the Divinity of the Christ: "The Lord hath said to my Lord: 'Sit Thou at My right hand';" and on the other, it contained an allusion to Daniel's vision,[12] where the Messiah "advanceth upon the clouds of Heaven unto the ancient of days," And therefore Jesus thereby proclaimed that He was the Christ for whom Israel had so long been waiting; that His place was on the right hand of God, and His mission to come at the end of time to judge the world.

But the Sanhedrin council turned a deaf ear to this testimony, and the high-priest's sole answer was to rend his garments.

"What further need have we of witnesses?" he cried aloud. "You have heard the blasphemy. How seems this matter to you?"

"He is worthy of death!" they all made answer.

Forthwith commenced a scene of unspeakable outrages. It seems, following Saint Mark's account [13] that even here, in the centre of the national council, some of these high functionaries, as if to give a signal for the indignities which ensued, were the first to spit full in the face of Jesus; then when they had so covered His face they struck Him with the flat of their hands, while others, says Saint Matthew, smote Jesus, and at every blow shouted —

"Christ, prophesy! who struck you?"

When their rage and fury had spent itself the Sanhedrin councillors handed Jesus over to their servants and the understrappers of the court. This throng received Him with a shower of blows from their sticks, according to the reading of the sacred text; while in another place we are told that they drove Him before them, maltreating Him in every manner.

III. Peter's Denial

John xviii. 12–18, 25–27; Luke xxii. 54–62; Matt. xxvi. 58, 69–75; Mark xiv. 54, 66–72

During this same night was accomplished what was foretold them by the Lord; while He stood for His trial before Annas and Caïphas, Peter, the chief of the apostles, denied Him thrice.

The evangelists note with considerable care the moment of these acts of infidelity; but they report the language and the circumstances so differently that it

11 Ps. cix. 1. 12 Dan. vii. 13. 13 Mark xiv. 65.

is quite impossible to regard them as the same words uttered on the same occasions. Instead of limiting the recusancy of the apostle to three disavowals framed by his lips, we believe it more likely that three distinct times during this night Peter was recognised by various persons, and that on these three occasions he proved false to his Master, each time reiterating his denial under different forms and before more than one witness. No one thing goes so far toward proving the independence of each single evangelist regarding the others as the freedom which they displayed in making their selections from the words and actions which still remained fresh in their memories, and the little pains they are at in order to make their narratives agree upon such points as this. When we compare the evidence, with this idea in mind, and without confusing their testimony, we find that each of them furnishes us with some new features in these stories, wherein the abundance of details, the variety and stirring movements of the characters serve to set Peter's falsehoods and downfall in stronger relief. To understand clearly the order of the incidents it behooves us to return to the first hours succeeding the scene in the garden.

Two of the apostles, after recovering from their first terror, retraced their steps in order to follow the road taken by the Saviour. Peter, who was one of them, lingered at a distance, but the other disciple drew nearer the troop of armed men; it was John, henceforth steadfastly exposing himself to every peril at the Master's side, and never quitting His sight. As he was known at the pontifical palace he managed to enter there with Jesus, not noticing that his companion no longer followed him.[14] The latter, fearing to appear inside the courtyard, hung back in the darkness without. Perceiving his absence John went out, spoke a word to the servant-maid who tended the wicket, and so introduced him into the house.

Casting a curious glance at the stranger, the portress asked sharply: "Aren't you too one of this man's disciples?"

"No, I am not!" replied Peter, and hurried quickly out of her way.

At this season of the year the nighttime in Judea is all the cooler in proportion to the extreme heats of the day. To protect themselves from the cold the guards and men servants had lighted in the lower court a small pile of such thorny brushwood as grows in abundance about Jerusalem. Seated in this little circle Peter was warming his trembling hands, "awaiting the end," when for the second time he encountered the keen glance of the portress.

She was scrutinising him fixedly by the aid of the firelight.

"Certainly," she said, "you were with Jesus of Nazareth."

Then before all present Peter denied Him, saying, "I do not know what you mean to assert." [15]

But she persisted that she was right, telling the others:

"Certainly, I know he was with him."

"Woman," Peter retorted again, "I do not even know Him." [16]

Then in great trouble of mind he walked away from the group of curi-

14 John xviii. 16, 17.

15 Matt. xxvi. 58, 69, 70; Luke xxii. 56; Mark xvi. 67.

16 Luke xxii. 56, 57.

ous by-standers; and at that moment was heard the first crow of the cock.

As he neared the great door he met with another maid-servant, to whom it would seem the portress had confided her suspicions. She too said to the waiting men and the rest standing about —

"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

And Peter denied it with an oath.[17]

The other maid in charge of the door had persisted in following after him, and at this she spoke up again:

"Surely," she said, "this is one of them."

Again he denied it.

One of the spectators in this scene addressed the apostle with the query: "What! are you one of that set yonder?"

"Man," retorted Peter, "I am not one of them." [18]

John had heard the first denial at the entrance-way of the palace, but altogether bent thereafter upon watching the trial of Jesus he was not a witness to the scenes just enacted, and related by the synoptic writers only. When he glanced out into the court the servants were stirring up the fire and warming themselves, for the night air was growing exceeding chill. Peter, stationed near them, still stood there warming himself.[19] Driven back from the door by his harassing questioners, he had returned to his former standing place. John overheard the voice of some one saying to him:

"You too are one of his disciples"; whereat he replied:

"No, I am not."

Tired at last of questioning him they left him unmolested for nearly an hour, but at length, after he had been drawn into a moment's conversation with his neighbours, they exclaimed:

"Certainly you are one of his disciples, for your accent betrays you.[20] You are a Galilean."

One of the High-Priest's servants, a kinsman of Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off, added:

"Did I not see you in the garden with him?"

Once more Peter's courage failed him.

"I do not know what you are talking about," he cried; "I do not know this man of whom you speak." And his fear betrayed itself in a stream of curses and oaths. He was still fiercely protesting when the cock crew for the second time.[21]

It was then that Jesus turned and looked at him.

This was more than Peter could bear. Suddenly he remembered how the Master had said to him:

"Before cock-crow thou shalt have denied Me thrice."

Overwhelmed with despair and beside himself, he had no further thought of the danger which threatened his steps. At his great outburst of grief the crowd fell back in surprise, leaving him a free passage. Rushing by them all he found

17 Matt. xxvi. 71, 72.
18 Luke xxii. 58.
19 John xviii. 18, 25.
20 Matt. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70; John xviii. 26.
21 Matt. xxvi. 74; Mark xiv. 72; Luke xxii. 60.

his way out of the palace, and, thinking upon the words of Jesus, he wept bitterly.

IV. The Second Sitting of the Sanhedrin

Luke xxii. 63–71, xxiii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 1, 2; Mark xv. 1; John xviii. 28

Handed over to the Sanhedrin guards, Jesus had to endure still greater indignities. Saint Luke, who omits the account of that night-session before Caïphas, first depicts the Saviour in the centre of this crowd of lackeys and grooms,[22] insulted, beaten and buffeted. "They blindfolded His eyes," he says, "and smiting Him on the face challenged Him to prophesy, and they uttered many other taunts and insults against Him."

Jesus remained for more than an hour at the mercy of their pitiless hands, for not until morning and broad daylight [23] did the members of the Sanhedrin summon Him again before them.

Ever since early dawn they had been closeted, advising as to the best means of executing the sentence which they had just pronounced against Jesus. The first requisite was to obtain the approval of the procurator, Pontius Pilate; for since the exile of Archelaus and the final subjugation of Judea the Sanhedrin had no longer any power to punish its prisoners with death. Rome, tolerant though she always was toward the religion of the vanquished, nevertheless reserved to herself the administration of justice, and charged the proconsuls to study local customs, in order to make them, if possible, accord with the Roman Code, and so form a body of laws peculiar to each region. It is true the general control of affairs was left to the ordinary judges of the province; but matters of appeal, any important suits and especially all cases of capital offence, remained subject to the governors. So, however jealous of their authority these councillors might be, they were obliged to bend beneath the yoke which at present held the world in check; yet in this instance they resigned themselves to necessity more willingly, because the concurrence of Pontius Pilate, by relieving them of all responsibility, would prevent any possible conflict with the people. For suppose that in a throng like the one which, five days ago, had cheered the Saviour's entry — suppose that some one of the sick folk, cured by His word, should utter his indignation at the condition to which their hatred had reduced Him; would not this be enough to excite an uprising, in the hope of rescuing Jesus? This was quite reason enough for their eagerness to have Him put into the safe keeping of Roman power, with the further hope of inducing the Governor to ratify their condemnation.

Their negotiations were destined to meet with considerable difficulties, for Pilate, however ready for bloodshed in moments of confusion and riot, in matters of public business cherished all a Roman's reverence for juridical forms. Now everything of the sort had been set at naught in the present procedure. There were certain prescriptions, wise as they were humane, which ordered that the judges should observe a fast, not pronouncing sentence until after mature con-

22 Luke xxii. 63–65. 23 Luke xxii. 66.

sideration, and in cases of capital offence they must even defer decision until at least one day after the examination. Furthermore, by these same rules the Sanhedrin was forbidden to assemble during the night, or to hold any sittings before the early sacrifice, which was offered at sunrise. Caïphas and his colleagues could not have been ignorant either of these statutes or of the contempt displayed toward them by such actions as they were now committing.

Anxious above all things to cover up any such irregularities on their part, they thought to accomplish their object by causing Jesus to appear before them again just at daybreak. The short interval which elapsed between the night-sitting and that of the morning did not alter the fact that the rule which commanded a day's delay was in reality infringed; for the Jewish law counted the day from evening to evening. Yet this distinction between night and day gave some slight semblance of legality to their proceedings, and therewith the hatred of the Sanhedrin was fain to rest content.

Accordingly Jesus was haled before His judges, and Caïphas began by repeatedly inquiring: [24]

"If you are the Christ, tell us."

"If I tell you," He replied, "you will not believe Me, and if I question you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go."

Thus He reminded these councillors of state that, only a few hours earlier and in their presence, He had proclaimed Himself the Messiah, and that they had refused to believe Him. Why, then, should they believe Him now? Every question which since His return to Jerusalem, He had addressed to them, whether it concerned John's baptism or had reference to the Christ, was still left unanswered. They did not intend to answer Him now any more than hitherto they had done; as for releasing Him, that they would never do. And notwithstanding this, Jesus consented to repeat once again and in the same terms, what He had said during the night just past — that He was the Son of Man and Son of God. Vainly had they struck and bruised Him, covering Him with spittle and vile abuse; thereafter, even as before this opprobrium, He revealed to His executioners how afar off, their victim was to appear all triumphant in the panoply of celestial glory, seated at the right hand of the Most-High.

"You, then, are the Son of God?" was the demand of the Sanhedrin.

"You have said it," replied Jesus; "I am He."

"What further need have we of witnesses?" [25] they cried instantly, "we have heard it for ourselves, from his own mouth."

Springing to their feet at these words they ordered Jesus to be bound still, more closely and hurried him away to the pretorium [26] forthwith.

V. Death of Judas

Matt. xxvii. 3–10; Acts i. 16–19

By a righteous retribution of human nature, the first victim of this iniquitous judgment was the very man who had been its prime mover and first cause.

24 Luke xxii. 66–71. 25 Luke xxii. 71. 26 Mark xv. 1.

Standing unheeded among the rabble of onlookers, in silence Judas had looked long and intently upon his victim, now finally separated from him; disquieted at heart, uneasy, still cherishing some secret hope perhaps that Jesus would overwhelm His judges and escape them in the end. But when he had witnessed His condemnation and had followed Him as far as the Governor's Palace, remorse was at last fully aroused in him. The life of Jesus, as he had witnessed it day by day, seemed to repass before his eyes in one mighty but distinct whole, and the last words of the Master resounded in his ears like an audible rebuke. Crushed and distraught with shame, possessed with a sort of madness he started forthwith, not in search of Jesus, Who would have repaid him with peace and salvation, but bent upon finding the priests who had been his accomplices in crime.

He had noted that, upon leaving the palace of Caïphas, they turned down a street leading to the Temple; thither he repaired [27] and mounted the stairway which divides the Sanctuary from the Gentiles' court. Between the priests' porches and those of the Jews stood the hall of Gazith. Although it was no longer the regular assembly chamber for the Sanhedrin, everything leads us to presume that it was here Judas found the priests and ancients gathered together.

"I have sinned," he cried; "I have betrayed the blood of The Just One;" and his shaking hand held out the thirty shekels before their faces.

Their only reply to this wretched appeal was disdainful enough:

"What does that matter to us? That is your affair."

Judas drew back the silver; then, in a frenzy of despair, as he crossed the great entrance of the Holy Place, he flung down the price of his treachery, there on the threshold, and disappeared.

The priests picked up the coins; hard by stood the huge coffers destined to receive the alms gifts.

"It is not permitted us," they said, "to put this money into the treasury, since it is the price of blood." [28]

O marvellous scrupulosity of these doctors of Israel, so accustomed to listen to nothing but their own evil passions, yet requiring so much deliberation before deciding as to the disposition of thirty pieces of silver! Happily Judas came to their aid.

On quitting the Temple, he took the road which descends toward the Fountain of Siloë. At the spot where Kedron joins Brook-Hinnom, he started up the sombre recesses of the latter, whose aspect was not of a nature to soothe his despairing soul. Even today, Jerusalem has no chillier nor gloomier region — a deep, narrow gorge, with beetling cliffs of jagged rocks, overshadowed here and there with dark olive trees, while still in this deep ravine, long ago cursed by Jeremy, the memory of those sacrifices to Moloch seems always to rise uppermost in one's mind. Judas made his way up the acclivity which rises opposite Mount Sion, and came to a halt in a clay field belonging to a potter thereabouts. From this point his eye could sweep the whole pathway, along which he had last night dragged his victim, from Gethsemani, to the pontiff's palace; and, as

27 Matt. xxvii. 3–10. 28 Deut. xxiii. 18.

he gazed, his mind altogether gave way under the burthen of mad despair. Then, says Saint Matthew,[29] "he went and hanged himself"; and in the Acts it is added that "the rope broke; his body, falling headlong to the earth, burst asunder, and his bowels were spilled over the Field of Blood." When informed of his death the Sanhedrin councillors hastened to dispose of their accomplice, whose conscience-stricken end would go far toward witnessing to the innocence of Jesus. The thirty shekels which were once Judas's still lay in their hands; with them they purchased the potter's field, in order to bury the body on the very spot where its bowels had gushed forth; then, hoping to efface the memory of his crime, they consecrated this region as a burial-place for such foreign proselytes as should thereafter die in the city. But the citizens of Jerusalem were informed of the tragic end of Judas, and, as this accursed ground had drunk the blood of the traitor, they called it Haceldama — "The Field of Blood."

Saint Matthew, as he is wont to do, here again refers to the words of the ancient prophets. This, then, was the very scene which Jeremias[30] had had before his prophetic vision when long since he descended Hinnom valley, before ever it was blasted by God's maledictions. In those days, indeed, it was a garden of delight, whose wooded banks were freshened by the waters of Siloë; but beneath its shadowing arches and round about the fagots heaped up in honour of Moloch there had reechoed unholy choruses, mingling with the clash of cymbals and psalteries. The prophet advanced, followed by the elders of the priesthood and the people, holding in his hand a vessel of that very same clay which in after days was to enclose the remains of Judas; and he broke it in their presence, saying:

"I will break this City and this people even as this vessel whose fragments can nevermore be put together, and Tophet shall become a field of sepulchres and corpses."

So, likewise, it was Judas' crime which Zachary had predicted when, picturing the ingratitude of Israel, Jehovah's chosen flock, he describes this people giving unto its shepherd, for a recompense, thirty shekels — which is the price of a slave; and the shepherd seizes this goodly wage, the price whereat Jesus was valued in the eyes of the Jews, that so it might be thrown to the potter, in payment of his waste ground.[31]

By these prophecies the Lord had revealed His betrayal long beforehand and now He had permitted it to be fulfilled.

29 Matt. xxvii. 5.

30 Matt. xxvii. 9; Jer. xix. 1–15.

31 Zach. xi. 12, 13.

CHAPTER III

JESUS AT THE PRETORIUM AND BEFORE HEROD

John xviii. 28–40; Matt. xxvii. 2, 11–25; Mark xv. 1–14; Luke xxiii. 1–25

The Sanhedrin, as we have seen, had determined to deliver Jesus to the jurisdiction of Pilate; [1] the priests, however, because their presence was demanded at the Temple for the morning sacrifice could not accompany Him; but the rest of the assembly formed a lengthy retinue around Jesus, which, after crossing the town, conducted the Prisoner within the precincts of the pretorium.

The Roman Governors were accustomed to take up their residence in the palaces of the princes whom they had supplanted, and, generally speaking, the procurators occupied Herod's royal seat on Mount Sion; but during the Paschal tide, Pilate resided in Antonia, the fortress erected north of the Temple and overlooking the porches. From the steep heights of this citadel, he could beat down any tumult of revolt, while at the same time he enjoyed its large and kingly appointments, its lofty galleries and baths, with the immense courts where his legionaries could all comfortably be encamped.

Borne along into one of these halls, Jesus stood at last in Pilate's presence. He was not altogether a stranger to the governor, for although Galilee and Perea, the usual field of His ministry, were not subject to the Roman jurisdiction, yet his preaching had so deeply stirred Jerusalem that reports of these events must have reached Cæsarea long before now. Beside this, Pilate's wife had come to be secretly drawn to the worship of Jehovah, and thereafter touched by the virtue of Him Whom she called "The Just," [2] she had often conversed with the procurator concerning Him. Accordingly we see him fully informed as to everything concerning Jesus — His title of Christ, the relentless spite of the Sanhedrin, and the bitter fanaticism which had hunted Him down.

The captive was alone; His accusers, despite their animosity, could not venture to cross the threshold of the pretorium. The dread of being contaminated, and thereby debarred from participating in the Passover, could even overmaster the longings which now filled their breasts to support their denunciations in person. However, if only by the shackles which pinioned Jesus' arms Pilate would easily understand that the Sanhedrin desired His death, it being their usage to deliver up in this condition such condemned felons as they judged worthy of the extremest penalty of the law.

At sight of Jesus, the first feeling of the judge was one of pity; there was nothing in His attitude which could be attributed to the pride of a seditious brawler, nothing which in any way invited punishment. Naturally endowed with the keenness common to all Roman politicians, Pilate suspected some plot and began to think that perhaps he would find occasion to revise rather than to confirm the Sanhedrin's sentence. Nevertheless, out of respect for the Jews'

1 Matt. xxvii. 2. 2 Matt. xxvii. 19.

scruples who refused to enter within the house, he went forth and met them in the outer court.[3]

"What accusation," he inquired, "do you bring against this man?"

The Sanhedrin had hoped that their eagerness and the moment at which they presented themselves would have prevailed with Pilate. Their disappointment found its utterance in bitter terms.

"If this man were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up to you."

This arrogant answer pricked the Governor's temper, and he responded in turn with an accent of irony and disdain.

"Take him yourselves," he said, "and judge him accordingly to your laws."

Would not excommunication, with the thirty-nine lashes from the whip, administered in the synagogue, be enough to punish any infringement of their rights?

"We no longer have the power of putting any one to death," replied the Jews, disclosing in this manner how far they wished to proceed. Mysterious disposition of providence! God had deprived them of all power over human life only that they might not stone the Christ, according to the law, but that Rome should lift Him up upon the Cross, "whereby He shall draw all men unto him." [4] Thus it was necessary that the saying of Jesus wherein He foretold by what death He was to die should be fulfilled.

Evidently Pilate was not inclined to ratify the condemnation of Jesus, but intended to review the whole procedure and judge the case for himself. Summoned to produce the leading points in their accusation, the Sanhedrin resigned themselves to necessity. The title, "the Son of God," which the Saviour had attributed to Himself, though the real cause of His ruin, was left unnoticed; but since by declaring Himself the Christ He thereby proclaimed Himself King of Israel, the latter claim was urged against Him, as of itself crime enough; and the accusation, reduced to these three charges, was so framed in order to stir Pilate to vengeance [5] most surely.

"We have found him," they said, "exciting the people, forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar, and calling himself the Christ-King."

But Pilate knew the Jews too well to be duped by their sudden zeal to avenge the wrongs of Rome. And besides this, his officers had not informed him of any signs of an incipient conspiracy, nor of any refusal to submit to the taxes. Hence he lent scanty credence to rumours of a sedition which would have given him little trouble to repress; but the word Christ caught his attention. What was the significance of this title, which seemed to involve at once a civil and a religious dignity? What royalty could the prisoner now in his hands lay claim to? Determined upon getting some light upon this question, Pilate reentered the pretorium and summoned Jesus.[6]

Thus, then, the Saviour was left alone with His judge — far removed from

3 John xviii. 29–31.
4 John xii. 32.
5 Luke xxiii. 2.
6 John xviii. 33–38.

the Jews whose distant cries of "Death to the Nazarene!" still reached His ears. Pilate, by screening Him from their furious clamour, had already let it be seen that his heart was not indifferent to the spectacle of such misfortunes. Jesus, far from profiting by this to plead His own interests, was altogether absorbed in the cause of eternal truth, and sought only to make it descend within the soul of this man now standing before Him — puzzled and uncertain, still in the darkness, yet just catching a glimpse of some celestial radiance meanwhile. Pilate was the first to speak.

"Are you truly king of the Jews?" he asked Jesus.

Always more attentive to the thought than to the words of His questioners, the Saviour answered him:

"Do you say this of yourself, or have others told you this of Me?"

Surprised at finding his mind so easily penetrated, the Governor responded, brusquely:

"Am I a Jew, forsooth? Your nation and your pontiffs have delivered you up to me. What have you done?"

This question drew forth no reply. Altogether intent upon the inward struggle which was now agitating Pilate, Jesus beheld with infinite compassion that he was trying to crush down the movements of grace, which were calling him to the truth, his conscience besetting him evermore with that persistent question:

"What, then, is this kingdom of his?"

Accordingly it was rather to this unspoken and secret question that the Christ made answer —

"My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My Ministers would strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews." But — as you may see from My fetters, from My forsaken state — "My Kingdom is not from hence."

"Then you are a king?" exclaimed Pilate.

"Thou hast said it," answered Jesus, and He added words which Saint John has not recorded at length, but certainly they were sufficient to confirm this declaration:

"I was born and I came into the world in order to render homage unto the truth. Whosoever is of the truth heareth My voice!"

"What is truth?" queried Pilate, and then at once turned away, to escape the ascendency which Jesus was exerting over him.

And with this thought he went out to the Jews and bespoke them again, with the assertion —

"I find nothing worthy of death in this man."

At this answer to their appeals, the cries of rage burst out more wildly than before. The priests and ancients persisted with great violence, besieging the governor's ears with accusations which grew ever vaguer, more contradictory and often entirely incomprehensible to him. He had Jesus brought forth. His very presence excited a new fury of abuse indeed it would seem, from Saint

Matthew's text, that the Sanhedrin councillors began to cross-question Him directly, but all to no purpose.[7]

"Do you not hear," Pilate said, turning toward Him, "of how many things they accuse you?"

Still Jesus answered not a word. This silence, this peaceful calm in the midst of a raging rabble, filled the Governor with admiration.

He was now casting about for some escape from his predicament, while still the Jews pleaded with fiercer persistency this time asserting —

"He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place." [8]

The name "Galilee" was a ray of light — thrown out with the design of reminding the judge of the uneasy character of that province and the blood of its conspirators lately shed in the Temple but, on the contrary, it only suggested an expedient whereby he might extricate himself from all responsibility in the affair. Immediately Pilate demanded whether Jesus was a Galilean, and having learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he remanded Him to the Tetrarch forthwith.

This Prince's suite was quartered in the ancient residence of the Machabees, to which Herod's sons had retired when their father's palace was occupied by the Roman governors. Thither the legionaries conducted Jesus, surrounded by His enemies. We shall not try to follow the Saviour over this portion of His sorrowful journey; but it is hardly probable that his guards would have forced him to descend the steep side of Moriah and then reascend the Hill of Sion, when by crossing from the western portico of the Temple and over the bridge of Tyropœon, they could at once reach the Prince's palace.

The appearance of Jesus before him excited only a frivolous pleasure in Herod's mind, for his depraved soul was now incapable of even such anxieties as were troubling Pilate's conscience. For a long time he had been kept informed of all the reports concerning the Christ, and he was only too anxious to be an eye-witness of some of His prodigies. Undoubtedly the young physician, to escape execution, would satisfy his curiosity by performing some miracle. Full of such ideas, Herod at first treated the prisoner with some show of respect, plied Him with questions, and pressed Him to display His supernatural power.

But Jesus had sounded the shallow depths of this prince's mind; and He, Who had had only words of tender mercy for Pilate, deigned not so much as a word in reply to Herod. This silence disconcerted the Tetrarch; the Sanhedrin party, on the other hand were not less deceived. They had counted upon recovering their ascendency with a prince of their nation, and, without urging any false pretexts, had expected him to strike immediately at what was most hateful to them in Jesus, His doctrine and His pretensions to the title of the Messiah; but all their furious entreaties and objurgations were thrown away on Herod.

Of Idumean ancestry, though a Jew by birth, and inclining naturally toward

7 Matt. xxvii. 12–14; Mark xv. 3–5. 8 Luke xxiii. 5–7.

the scepticism of the Sadducees, the Tetrarch had long ago stifled his conscience too thoroughly to admit of his now taking any interest in questions of religion. And, further than this, by condemning Jesus would he not run the risk of a popular movement in His favour? Or at any rate, there was the possibility of incurring such terrors as had assailed him after the execution of John Baptist! Anxious above all things not to endanger his own comfort, the despotic egoist lost no time in returning compliment for compliment, by remanding Jesus back again to Pilate. Provoked, however, at having been so set at naught, he desired on his side to display his disdain for the Christ and in token of derision, had Him arrayed in a white robe. What was this garment meant to travesty? Perhaps the consul's toga or that of the Roman candidates, thus disguising Jesus as though he were some puppet sovereign of the stage; or was it perhaps the garb assumed by Jews acquitted of capital offence, Herod indicating by this that he regarded the prisoner as a fool, incapable of any crime? The procurator appears to have interpreted it in this last sense, for, in arguing with the people for the life of the Christ, he urged in His defence this burlesque acquittal.

Distasteful as it was to Pilate to resume a trial of which he had thought himself unburdened, yet he took considerable satisfaction from this mark of courtesy on Herod's part, and their mutual deference put an end to all resentment between them. The governor's undertakings, hitherto, hostile to the Tetrarch's authority; the blood of the Galileans shed in the Temple — everything in fact was forgotten, and on this same day they became friends.

Once again Jesus was hurried along the road to Antonia. The insulting magnificence with which He was attired rendered His wretched state more striking. Pilate was touched thereat, and, fortified by Herod's dismissal, endeavoured to wrest their victim from the Sanhedrin's clutches. Accordingly he assembled the princes of the priesthood and the magistrates; but they, on their part, bent upon forcing his consent, had collected a mob of the populace in order to influence him further.[9]

With Jesus at his side, Pilate addressed them.

"You have produced this man before me," he said, "and accuse him of exciting the people; and now I, after having examined him before you, find nothing in him touching what you charge him withal. And in like manner Herod, to whom I referred you, has found nothing in him worthy of death."

Whether a threatening silence or a fresh outcry greeted these words, Pilate, at all events believed it was best to make amends for them somehow, so he added:

"I will chastise him, therefore, and let him go."

Lightly as he regarded the penalty referred to in these words, it was none the less a piece of iniquitous acquiescence on his part, and a sign of weakness which could not escape the Sanhedrin party. They resolved to push their advantage with all their strength.

Meanwhile the crowds were beginning to ascend the approaches to the for-

9 Luke xxiii. 13-16.

tress Antonia, attracted either by the assembly drawn up before the pretorium or to take part in a ceremony which was always performed just at this time. During the morning of the Parasceve, the Roman governors, in order to heighten the solemnity of Passover time, had always granted a pardon to some prisoner designated by the Jews. This custom, of which we find no trace either in scripture or in the rabbinical traditions, had doubtless been introduced by some procurator, anxious to conciliate his new subjects. Rome, always ready to extend amnesties, either in public calamities or at the anniversaries of the Cæsars, afterwards consecrated this favour accorded by one of her magistrates, and we see Pilate respecting the observance as though it had all the force of a law.

The sight of the multitudes thronging the square of Gabbatha, and with loud shouts demanding this privilege, suggested a new expedient to Pilate's mind. Among the condemned who were to be executed according to custom during the Paschal season, there was a man named Barrabas, notorious for his wickedness.[10] At the head of a riotous herd, he had caused bloodshed in Jerusalem itself, and headed a revolt, not only against the authority of Rome, but against that of the Sanhedrin as well; for it was from their prison that the Governor was about to procure him. Saint John's exclamation, remembering how that the divine Master was compared to him, is testimony enough as to the contempt with which the criminal was popularly regarded:

"Now Barrabas was a robber!" [11]

Pilate hoped that between this scoundrel and the innocent One Whom they were pursuing, the Jewish populace would not hesitate to give the latter the preference.

"Whom do you wish me to deliver to you?" he cried, "Barrabas, or Jesus who is called Messiah?" And so speaking, he ascended the steps of the tribunal, set before the Pretorium.

No sooner was he seated than some of his servants came in search of him, sent thither by his wife.

From her apartments in the Fortress she was now looking down upon this scene. Tradition tells us that her name was Claudia Procula, and that she was a pious lady, one of the "proselytes of the gate" so numerous just then in the ranks of the Roman nobility; a divine light had shown her that the doctrine of Jesus was still more perfect than the Law of Jehovah. All the night previous a strange uneasiness had taken possession of her at the first report that the young teacher was to be arrested; nor had sleep in the least calmed her anguish of spirit, but all night long terrible dreams had disturbed her slumbers. Consequently, when she saw Jesus encircled by the furious mob, with Pilate hesitating and half prepared to condemn Him, she bade some of her people bear this message to her husband:

"Let there be nothing between you and that just man, for I have been greatly distressed in a dream this day because of him."

Alone against all these wicked judges, these false witnesses, these inhuman wretches, a pagan woman found, deep down in her heart, enough of strength

10 Matt. xxvii. 16; Mark xv. 7. 11 John xviii. 40.

and tenderness to plead the cause of Jesus. Of this deed Christians have ever cherished a grateful memory, while the Greeks have given her a place in their Menology in the company of the Saints.

But these few moments had been turned to their own advantage by the priests and magistrates. Spreading their views through the multitude, they finally had succeeded in inflaming them with their fierce passions, persuading them to choose Barrabas in preference to the Saviour.[12]

And so, when Pilate demanded for the second time: [13] "Do you wish me to deliver to you the king of the Jews?" one unanimous shout rose from the surging populace:

"Rid us of him and release Barrabas!"

"What shall I do, then, with him whom you call the king of the Jews?" replied the Governor.

"Crucify him, crucify him!" responded the crowd with one voice.

"But what evil has he done?" persisted the judge, now become advocate for his prisoner. "As for me, I find no cause of death in him. I will chastise him therefore and let him go."

But then the multitude repeated with wilder tumult —

"Crucify him, crucify him!"

"And their horrible efforts against Him grew in strength evermore, clamouring that He might be crucified, while still the shouts continued to increase." [14]

Seeing that he gained nothing, while on the contrary the uproar was only swelling, Pilate wished to declare plainly that he looked upon Jesus as a just man, and that he intended to disclaim any responsibility for His death.[15] There was a custom in Israel which ordained that the magistrates of any city where the author of a murder remained undiscovered should wash their hands over the corpse of the victim, in witness of their own innocence.[16] This deed, prescribed by Deuteronomy, served the governor in place of further speech with the people, who were sharply watching his every action. He therefore ordered water to be brought, and therewith washed his hands.

"I am innocent of the blood of this just man," he said; "now, then, it is your own concern!"

Whereupon all the people answering said:

"His blood be upon us and upon our children!"

Pilate had not courage to resist further, and discharging Barrabas, released from his chains, he delivered over the Christ into the hands of the soldiery. Doubtless he did not mean as yet to abandon Him; but, because whipping was the first preliminary for crucifixion, he hoped that the blood of Jesus would appease His enemies and enable him, even yet, to rescue Him.

12 Matt. xxviii. 20.
13 Mark xv. 9.
14 Luke xxiii. 22, 23; Mark xv. 14.
15 Matt. xxvii. 24-26.
16 Deut. xxi. 6.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS

Matt. xxvii. 26–30; Mark xv. 15; John xix. 1–16

The scourging inflicted upon Jesus was a cruel torture. Stripped of his garments and fastened by the wrists to a low column, the condemned person offered his back to blows which tore his flesh. The instrument of punishment for foreigners was not the rod of elm wood reserved for Roman citizens, but a leathern thong, armed with knobs of bone and balls of lead. At every cut from this horrible lash the skin was raised in ragged furrows, blood streamed forth, and frequently the victim would fall at the lictors' feet, thereby exposing every portion of his frame to their attacks. It was no rare thing to see the sentenced man succumb under this preliminary torture; for the Roman law had not set any limits to the duration of their sufferings, like those fixed by the Sanhedrin. No rule determined the number of blows; everything was left to the caprice of the lictors, who stopped at nothing short of a surfeit of cruelty or from sheer muscular exhaustion.

The Gospels record this whipping without entering into its details; but the silence of Jesus, which acted as a savage spur to the fury of the executioners, Pilate's plan to move the sympathies of the Jews by the spectacle of their victim, the condition to which the Saviour was reduced, so that He could not afterwards sustain His Cross — all the facts, indeed, make us conjure up a scene of prolonged agony. It all took place in the Pretorium and under the eyes of the people, for we see that immediately after the flagellation the soldiers brought Jesus back into the court of Antonia.[1]

And there, renewing the insulting farce just now enacted by Herod in their presence, they shouted to the others of their cohort, and together these fellows offered their scurrilous homage to the new "King of the Jews." [2] Jesus, mounted in derision upon a throne, was covered with a mantle of red cloth such as the legionaries wore. In the meantime some of the ruffians had woven a crown of thorns with which they at once encircled the Saviour's head; then, taking a reed strong as wood, they set it in His Hand. With a throne, a crown, a sceptre, nothing was lacking now to the regal state of the new monarch, save the worshipful fealty of His subjects; accordingly such tokens were lavished upon Him:

"Hail, king of the Jews!" they shouted, reverently bending the knee before Him, but rising again only to load Him with rough blows and with spittle discharged full at His face.

During this series of outrages the reed slipped from the hand of Jesus, Who was still bound tightly and utterly helpless; suddenly they seized it, and striking that sacred head, drove the thorns fast within His brow. The compassion which Pilate always displayed for Jesus makes it impossible to believe that the

1 Matt. xxvii. 27; Mark xv. 16. 2 Matt. xxvii. 27–30.

Governor was a witness of this scene. However, his orders had been faithfully executed, even exceeded, and he desired to profit thereby to excite the sympathy of the people. Once more appearing upon the square of Gabbatha [3] he bespoke their attention.

"Behold," he said to the Jews, "I bring him out hither to you, that so you may know I find no crime in him."

And Jesus came forth, the crown of thorns upon His forehead, the red robe hanging about His blood-stained body. Then they forced Him to mount the steps of the tribunal.

"Behold the man!" Pilate cried to the throng.

But their hearts were shut now against pity.

"Crucify him, crucify him!" they shouted.

Their cruelty stirred the Governor's indignation; he had something like a resolution to save Jesus.

"Take him you and crucify him; for indeed I find no cause of death in him."

The Jews could not construe this as meaning a permission in any serious sense; and this was why, upon seeing all their accusations were of no avail, they at last unmasked the real reason of their relentless hatred of Jesus — His so-called blasphemy, whereby He made Himself equal with God, a crime which the Law punished by stoning [4] the guilty man. Rome respected the religious customs of its subjects; they therefore hoped that the Governor would end by yielding to their wishes.

"We have a law," they said, "and according to that law he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God."

Son of God! The words threw Pilate's mind into a state of still greater uneasiness. In vain did he turn away from the Victim Whom his soldiers had been disfiguring with their heavy whips. A King just now, Jesus had suddenly risen above the ranks of mankind. Yet had not this Jew, Whose sole crime it was that He said He was the Son of God — had He not, perhaps, justified His high claims by His calm bearing amid the brutality of His torturers? All the mythological dreams in which Pilate's childhood had been cradled, the soldiers' own story, how last night they had been flung back to earth at His word, the vision appearing to his wife, these all came crowding back upon his mind.

"What did they mean by this 'Son of God?' Whence came he?"

More troubled than ever, he bade them bring back the Saviour; then alone, and face to face with Him, he said:

"Whence are you?"

Jesus made no reply.

"What!" exclaimed the Governor, "do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have both power to crucify you and the power to break your bonds asunder?"

"You should have no power over Me," responded Jesus, "if it were not given you from above."

3 John xix. 4–16. 4 Lev. xxiv. 16.

Then comparing Pilate's crime with that of the Jews, He distinguished between the guilt of hatred and that of weakness —

"And this is why the crime of him who delivers Me into your hands is greater than yours."

Yielding finally to the voice of conscience the Governor determined to release Jesus; again he stepped forth from the pretorium, whereupon a new storm of cries assailed him.

"If you release this man you are no friend of Cæsar; whoever makes himself a king is Cæsar's enemy."

Terrible threat, for the Cæsar of that day was Tiberius, and no one there but knew what powers lay in the reach of informers. Even Herod had not been able to defend himself against the statements of these Jews; his son Archelaus had lately been deposed at their instance; little more than this would be enough to overwhelm Pilate. Straightway losing sight of Jesus his mind pictured only that suspicious master of his world, who, from the rocky heights of Caprea, made the earth tremble; saw in a flash the Jews summoning him before this inexorable judge — the crime of high treason charged against him — his fortune plundered — then exile and death. He could make no stand against these phantoms of his imagination; fear of the future overmastering every other feeling he commanded Jesus to be brought out, and himself ascended the judgment-seat. It was the eve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour (between half-past ten and eleven in the morning); the Jews were surging wildly about the high tribunal where Pilate, although become the tool of their hatred, strove still to command respect by veiling his terrors under a semblance of haughty contempt.

"This, then, is your king?" he began again.

But his voice was drowned by the cries of the multitude.

"Away with him, away with him!"

"Crucify him!"

"This is your king; shall I crucify your king?"

One last word gave the spur to his tardy resolution.

"We have no king but Cæsar," shouted the chief priests.[5]

Vanquished at last he delivered Jesus into their hands.

His crime was to be severely punished; three years had not elapsed when, upon the depositions of certain Samaritans, Vitellius, Proconsul of Syria, delegated Marcellus to take in hand the affairs of Judea, and enjoined Pilate to proceed to Rome, and there clear himself of the accusations brought against him. The fearful misgivings to which he had succumbed in sacrificing Jesus became realities; condemned in his turn, despoiled of all his property, he was sent into exile. Vienne still points out, upon the banks of the Rhone, a high pyramid which passes for the tomb of Pilate. We are told by various traditions that it was here, when dragged down by remorse, the banished man put a violent end to his existence. Still other legends would have us believe that, in the midst of his misfortunes, he was sought out by the grace of Jesus; and the Abyssinian Church finds a place in the ranks of the saints for this weak-spirited

[5] John xix. 17.

man who, nevertheless, was a Christian, says Tertullian, in the fugitive, impotent longings of his soul.

CHAPTER V

THE CRUCIFIXION

John xix. 16–22; Matt. xxvii. 31–34, 37, 38; Mark xv. 20–23, 25–27; Luke xxiii. 26–34, 38

A long road, hallowed by the veneration of centuries as the Via Dolorosa, now opened before Jesus. But is it possible, in our day, to still discover any footprints of the condemned God, or to retrace step by step that Way of the Cross now followed daily by so many Christians? No, we think not; however, the criticisms which have been levelled against the traditional stations have not succeeded in overthrowing them altogether. The pretorium, rising just north of the Temple, unquestionably marks the beginning of the Via Dolorosa; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, whose walls enclose Calvary, indicates its end; so that at all events these were the two furthest points between which stretched the road trodden by Jesus on His weary journey to execution and death.

Now precisely this line is the one in fact followed by the Via Dolorosa. Undoubtedly heaps upon heaps of ruins have accumulated within this city, where, one after another, Romans, Persians, and Mussulmans have burned and levelled everything down to the ground. Sixty, sometimes even eighty, feet of ashes and rubbish now conceal the original surface over which Jesus dragged His bleeding feet. But though it would be childish to expect to find Jerusalem wearing the same features today as in the time of the Saviour, yet neither must we forget that the East treasures the memory of names and places with wonderful fidelity. Even out of these same ruins it could reconstruct the Sanctuary, the Sacred Tomb, all the overturned and shattered monuments. These long cherished recollections of the Via Dolorosa, therefore, have a real value, and they indicate, if not the precise spots, at least that quarter of the town wherein we must locate the scenes of the Passion.

This road descended from the pretorium into Tyropœon Valley, and trending westward climbed a steep hillside. Almost along the summit ran the city walls, and farther afield, hemmed about by gardens and houses, lay the place of execution, Golgotha. This name, meaning a skull, doubtless in those days designated some bald and lonely rock, rising from out the earth and lying skull-like upon this waste stretch of open. Certain Jewish traditions declared that the head of Adam had been interred in this place, thus giving it its name; and this legend heightened the dread with which it was surrounded in the popular imagination. Golgotha must have been but a short distance beyond the walls of Jerusalem, for both the Greeks and Romans were wont to execute convicted

criminals just at the gates of the towns, and near some thoroughfare sufficiently frequented to make the spectacle serve as a public example.

According to Saint John's narrative, after His condemnation Jesus passed into the hands of the Jews:[1] "Pilate," he tells us, "delivered Jesus to them to be crucified; then they took Him and led Him forth to death." However, we need only complete this evidence by comparing it with that of the Synoptic writers to feel sure that some of the Roman soldiers, with a centurion in command, acted as the executioners of a sentence never in use among the Jews. The high priests were content merely to countenance the proceedings by their presence.

The execution followed immediately upon the sentence. This was Roman usage, while the Jews were in haste to see everything finished, for fear lest the body should be left upon the cross, and thereby profane the sanctity of their festival.[2] Accordingly the procession was formed forthwith; at its head rode a centurion on horseback, behind him walked four soldiers surrounding Jesus, and the two criminals sent with Him to their death. The Saviour no longer wore the red robe; His executioners had taken it from Him, and again covered Him with His own garments.[3] But His head still bore the crown of thorns, and about His neck they had hung a tablet, whereon was written His condemnation.

The instrument of torture was now produced; its form, as preserved by tradition, is known to us by the name of the Latin cross — a long wooden post intersected near the top by a shorter cross-beam, intended to hold the hands, while the upper part was intended to bear the legal inscription. Although this Cross had not the dimensions often given it by Christian images, yet it weighed heavily upon the Lord's lacerated shoulders. Condemned criminals dragged their own gibbets to the place of execution, and however cruel might have been the whipping so recently suffered by them, ordinarily enough strength was spared them to support this load; but it was not so with the Saviour, now altogether exhausted, after the Agony of Gethsemani, the sweat of blood, and the lashes at the hands of the lictors.

All was ready; the procession marched rapidly toward Golgotha. Stared at by an insolent crowd of sightseers, Jesus dragged that heavy badge of infamy across the rough streets of Jerusalem, and up the road which climbs Calvary-wards. He was all but reaching the gates when His powers failed Him; no gibes and curses, no blows from pike and javelin, were spared to spur up such unfortunates as fell under their burden; but they soon saw that violence would be useless here — that their victim was incapable of carrying His Cross any further.

Just at this juncture a man happened to be entering the town; he was a Cyrenean Jew returning from the country. From his dress and the provisions he had with him in readiness for the Pasch, the soldiers saw at a glance that he was a stranger employed at servile labour; to their minds this was ample excuse for obliging him to perform one of those forced services which the caprice of the

1 John xix. 16. 2 John xix. 31. 3 Mark xv. 20.

legionaries was continually imposing upon provincial inhabitants. They therefore compelled him to carry the Cross after Jesus.[4]

This compulsory service rendered to the Saviour has sufficed to preserve the name of Simon the Cyrenean from oblivion. Was he a disciple of the Christ? The gospel does not say so, but Saint Mark recalls that Simon was father of Alexander and Rufus, names known among the early Christians as belonging to brethren in the faith.[5]

But for Jesus, the soldiers must needs help Him to rise, and even keep Him up along the way as far as Calvary. At sight of the Man of Sorrows dragged to execution a shudder of pity swept through the throng, and a group of women who were close to Jesus lifted up their voices in cries of lamentations, wailing and beating their breasts.[6] The Law did indeed forbid them to render any such tokens of sympathy and regret to those about to die, but the compassion to which they gave utterance upon beholding the Christ was one of those movements which no ordinances can crush out altogether.

Moved by the great grief of these women Jesus turned toward them, saying —

"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me; but weep for yourselves and for your children; for soon the days shall come when they will say: 'Blessed are the barren! Blessed are the wombs which have not borne, and the breasts which have not given suck!' Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills: 'Cover us!' For if men deal thus with the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?"

This response could not fail to surprise the women of Jerusalem — its tone, so grave, so solemn, and well nigh severe, savouring not so much of gratitude for their tears, but sounding rather like an exhortation to penitence. Thus indeed Jesus displays greater anxiety for them than for Himself; for to these very women the prophetic voice had once uttered those strange words of Osee the son of Beeri:

"Give unto them, Lord! But what wilt thou give them? Give unto them childless wombs and dry breasts. . . And they shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us'; and to the hills, 'Fall upon us.' " [7]

Forty years later these same maidens who now heard the words of Jesus were to be enveloped in the desolation of Jerusalem. These young mothers were to behold the sword and the torch consume the flower of the harvest of Israel; the underground causeways of the city incapable of shielding their children against the insatiable rage of their conquerors; the corpses of the citizens heaped therein by thousands; while in the delirium of famine they themselves would actually devour the offspring of their wombs. Need we marvel, then, that, at beholding the swift approach of such mighty woes, the Saviour trembled for these women, beseeching them to do penance?

And that He might make them more fully realise their need thereof, He borrows from the holy books that example of the evergreen tree, symbol of

4 Matt. xxvii. 32.
5 Mark xv. 21.
6 Luke xxiii. 27–31.
7 Osee ix. 14, x. 8.

virtue in its integrity, whereof He, the Just One, is the perfect Archetype. Bidding them mark His torn and wounded body, and the brand which pierced his brow —

"If men deal thus with the green tree," He exclaimed, "what will they do with the dry wood?"

Bereft of His strength and powerless, Jesus at last reached the place of execution. The soldiers offered Him wine mingled with myrrh and poppy,[8] which the Jews were accustomed to give to condemned criminals, thereby producing a sort of lethargy, and so lightening their sufferings. Charitable ladies of noble rank were wont to prepare this themselves and carry it to the prisoners. So, complying with the Jewish usage, the soldiers presented this beverage to the Saviour.

Jesus, having tasted of it, would not drink, but steeled Himself to accept all the bitterness and hardships of His execution; His gaze was riveted upon the necessary preliminaries — the Cross driven into the ground, hammers and the nails got ready, ladders raised aloft, cords knotted and prepared. And so, at the nearness of His hour of torment, though a shudder may have shaken His limbs, His soul stood steadfast waiting the approach of death.

Finally the executioners seized Him and stripped Him of His garments; the Crucified Captive must hang naked upon the gibbet. The cords, when pulled up by the soldiers, dragged His body up to the spike protruding from the middle of the Cross. This piece of wood, which passed under the legs of the condemned, was strong enough to hold him and prevent the weight of the body from tearing the hands from the iron nails. Transfixed upon this stool of torture, Jesus stretched out His arms. Doubtless it was necessary to bind the limbs to the cross-pieces, in order to keep the feet and hands from slipping off the nails with which they were pierced. First the hands were fastened, the iron being driven through the palm, or wrist. Sometimes the feet were only bound with cord, but usually the executioner nailed them to the post, and this was what was done with Jesus; for after the Resurrection we see Him showing His disciples His feet pierced even as His hands, while tradition, with one accord, has applied to Him the psalmist's [9] prophecy —

"They have pierced My feet and My hands."

In that same hour was accomplished the Oracle of Isaias: [10]

"He was numbered with transgressors."

Two crosses had now been set up, one on the right, the other on the left of Jesus, bearing two thieves condemned to death with Him.

It only remained for the soldiers to affix above the head of the Christ, the inscription dictated by Pilate. Thereon were to be read, in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin, these words:

"This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." [11]

At this derisive title, and at sight of the two convicts ranged about the Christ, as though forming His rightful court and they His true people, the Jews at once

8 Matt. xxvii. 34; Mark xv. 23.
9 Ps. xxi. 17.
10 Is. liii. 12.
11 John xix. 19–22.

comprehended the satire thus levelled against them. Too weak, indeed, to uphold his authority against the excited multitude, Pilate had regained at last a glimmer of courage, and immediately cast about for some occasion to avenge himself; so when he was handed the tablet designed to publish the crime of which Jesus was found guilty, he wrote thereon this insult to the Jews, and, that it might be better understood, he employed not only Latin, the official language, but Greek as well, since that was more familiar to the Jews of the Dispersion, and also the Aramean dialect, because generally understood by the populace. And furthermore, as if he feared that the outrage might still not be obvious enough to all beholders, he commanded that, on either side of Jesus two robbers should be conducted and crucified with Him — thereby showing the Jews plainly in what contempt he held both their nation and their dreams of royalty.

During the anxiety and rapidity of the march this superscription had not been noticed; but hardly was it affixed to the Cross before the affront was well understood. Soon the whole city was aware of it; for Golgotha lay at the gates of Jerusalem, and crowds all day passed before the gibbet. Straightway the high priests, laying aside their preparations for the Pasch, acted again as the people's spokesmen and went in search of the governor.

They demanded that he should change the superscription and write, not: "Behold the King of the Jews!" but "Behold him who called himself the king of the Jews!"

"That which is written is written," responded Pilate.

CHAPTER VI

DEATH OF JESUS

John xix. 23–30; Matt. xxvii. 33, 35, 39–50; Mark xv. 24, 29–37; Luke xxiii. 34–37, 39–46

The soldiers had finished their work of fastening Jesus to the Cross; the last spike had been driven through His limbs. Thereupon the Saviour's first thought was to plead for them.

"Father, forgive them," He said, "for they know not what they do." [1]

Touching words, yet scarcely heard by those ruffianly soldiers; for other cares already absorbed their attention. Since the Roman law allowed them such spoils as they could take from the prisoner's person, they now proceeded to share among themselves the tunic and mantle of Jesus. The latter garment, being made of many pieces, was quickly separated into four equal shares; but the tunic was without seam, "and, from top to bottom, of the same weft"; to divide it would have been to destroy its value.

"Let us not cut it," said the soldiers, "but cast lots for it, whose it shall be."

1 Luke xxiii. 34.

And so they appealed to chance for a decision who was to wear the Christ's robe.

"This," says Saint John, "was in fulfilment of those prophetic words: 'They have parted My garments among them, upon My robe they have cast lots.' " [2]

Now when all was settled, the soldiers seated themselves at the foot of the Cross and kept guard, lest any one should try to remove the bodies of the crucified before they expired.

Generally, when upon the scaffold, criminals are given some last tokens of pity and respect. Jesus had not even this consolation. His enemies, after being so long baulked of their prey while He was protected by the pretorium, now crowded about the Cross and revenged themselves by loading Him with vile jeers and hideous abuse. Foremost in the ranks of the rabble were those lying witnesses produced by the Sanhedrin the night before. They passed and repassed continually before the gibbet, wagging their heads [3] in token of contempt, blaspheming and reminding the Christ of the calumnies to which He had fallen a victim:

"Bah! you who would destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days, come, save yourself and descend from the cross!"

Others hurled at Jesus the selfsame challenge which He had once heard in the days of His first temptation:

"If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" [4]

However, the multitude still stood motionless, regarding the Saviour with more of curiosity than hatred. This silence irritated the Sanhedrin party, for in the meanwhile even such neutrality might be enough to allow the voice of justice to become audible in the depth of the people's heart. Accordingly we soon see these princes of Israel taking part in the clamour, along with their slaves and menials. There were the same taunting invectives, the same senseless fury, with nothing but their more spiteful arrogance to distinguish them from the poorer mob. They disdained even to turn towards the Christ and insult Him to His face, but, gathering together, priests, scribes, and ancients scoffed and jeered among themselves at His speechless agony.[5] Not daring to deny, in presence of the people, the miracles of the Galilean, they tried to blacken their renown, by contrasting them with the powerlessness to which He was now publicly reduced.

"He saved others," they sneered, "but he cannot save himself!"

Then, lifting their eyes toward the superscription, whose humiliating irony was Pilate's most offensive thrust,

"Let 'the Christ,' " they cried, " 'the King of Israel,' forthwith descend from his cross, in order that we may see him and that we may believe in him!"

That title of "the Christ" brought back to the mind of Jesus all the last night's trial, the scene before the king, the struggles from which Pilate had retired vanquished, Himself stripped and scourged, then the long road to execution. Still

2 Ps. xxi. 19.
3 Mark xv. 29, 30.
4 Matt. xxvii. 40.
5 Mark xv. 31, 32.

their rage waxed fiercer; now it even ventured to attack the love which Jesus bore His Father and, in its blasphemy, dared to defy the Almighty.

"He put his trust in God; so if God loves him [6] let Him deliver him, for he said: 'I am the son of God.' "

Nothing could check this fresh outburst of obloquy; in a short time the contagion spread through the masses, until the soldiers themselves had caught the spirit. These fellows, now standing before Him, held up with mock sympathy the wine cup from which they had been drinking among themselves, and shouted at Jesus, with the crowd:

"If you are the king of the Jews, now save yourself!"

And yet the insulting tumult had not reached its culminating point. Jesus had been given companions in His sufferings, and He now beheld even these fellows turn against Him, and from those crosses, set up at His either hand, He heard this blasphemy reechoed:

"If you are the Christ, save yourself, save us!" [7]

But only one of the robbers had spoken; the other gazed upon the Saviour, filled with admiration at His patient fortitude, and feeling his own heart drawn toward Him. So when he heard his comrade scoff, he rebuked him, saying:

"You have no fear of God, although you are condemned to the same sentence! Yet for us, this is only justice, since we suffer pains we have merited, but this man here has done no evil."

Then, his faith springing up as if in quick response to his own testimony:

"Lord," he exclaimed, "when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom, remember me!"

Never did grace so suddenly transform a criminal into a martyr, but surely never was confession of faith more meritorious, for it was in the very hour when, deserted and betrayed by all, Jesus hung in death upon the tree, that the good thief paid homage to His divine Kingliness.

At this moment the Saviour could not make the slightest movement without intensifying His own anguish; yet as He heard this prayer, He bent His head toward His companion and said:

"I tell thee that, of a truth, today thou shall be with Me in Paradise."

The humble penitent had only begged a place in His memory, and lo, this rich boon is granted him — even the blessedness of God's Presence. He had been contented with a ray of hope, but from this same day a never ending happiness had become his portion. Saint Matthew and Saint Mark seem not to have been aware of this episode, as recorded in the third Gospel, for they only speak in vague terms of blasphemies having been uttered by the two brigands. We know how much Saint Luke was indebted to Mary; doubtless it was from her lips he learned these words which passed from one to the other of those high crosses, only overheard by the Mother who stood so steadfastly beneath the gibbet of her expiring Son.

Meanwhile the storm of passion which His foes had raised around the silent

[6] Matt. xxvii. 43. [7] Luke xxiii. 39–43.

Christ had grown less violent; though now and then the uproar would swell, as it was caught up again by the populace, renewed shouts bursting forth here and there. But by this time a mass of dank and murky vapours, which had been rising over the earth, began to mount upward towards the cross, enveloping it as in a funeral pall.[8] Terror speedily thinned the ranks of the throng; soon the space encircling the three crosses was left bare, and a little group drew nearer; it numbered only three women, with one of the disciples. There was the Blessed Virgin with her sister Mary, Cleophas' wife; close beside them was Magdalene, the sinner, while John followed in their footsteps. His name indeed is not inscribed here in the inspired history, but everything betrays his presence — not only the reticence he shows in mentioning his own part therein, but even this very position beside his Lord, whither the Beloved Disciple could not have failed to find his way.

Face to face with the Cross, they halted, transfixed, their gaze riveted upon Him Whom they loved. And Jesus, after having first remembered His torturers only to forgive them their share in His sufferings, after remembering the companion of His anguish, that so He might open to him the heavenly gates — Jesus at length allowed His eyes to fall upon His own friends, who came to ask one last farewell; and looking, He beheld His Mother pierced with the sword whereof the aged Simeon had years ago forewarned her.

The tenderest of all the Church's hymns, our *Stabat Mater*, does but feebly express the poignant grief within her Mother's heart at such a woeful spectacle. Better than any one else Jesus realised what it meant for her; it was death He beheld drawing down upon Himself, but for His Mother He could see only present grief and future loneliness. Of all His apostles, John alone remained by Him, and, growing more faithful in proportion as the danger increased, he now stood close at her side, protecting Mary.

Careful not to utter her name, fearing lest He might expose her to insults by revealing who she was, Jesus said, gently —

"Woman, behold thy son!"

And then to John —

"Behold thy Mother!"

From that moment the disciple received Mary into his dwelling[9] and regarded her as his Mother.

This last link binding him to earth now broken, Jesus cast Himself upon God's bosom, that so His Passion might be consummated. It was noonday when the first shades crept round about Golgotha;[10] thereafter they had still continued to float upwards shrouding Jerusalem, Judea, and the entire world in a black winding sheet. No natural cause could be sufficient to account for this phenomenon, for the moon, just now at the full, rendered an eclipse of the sun impossible. But the ground is wont to be swathed in murky vapours at the approach of earthquakes, which tear asunder the bowels of the earth, and now the world was wrapped in the trappings of woe, to bemoan the sufferings of its God. The Cross, whereon the Christ hung in death, was hidden in a thick,

8 Mark xv. 33. 9 John xix. 27. 10 Matt. xxvii. 45.

black cloud; all human noises were hushed and died away, and the cry which antiquity has put into the mouth of Dionysius the Areopagite expresses that mighty fear which shook the souls of men:

"Either the Divinity suffers, or He is moved to pity at some great woe!"

In this death of the Cross, the torture grew each instant more unendurable; the lacerated feet and hands, the shattered body, wrenched so violently apart, the involuntary contraction of the muscles, the thirst, the delirium of fever — everything intensified each separate pang to such a point that the crucified criminal cried upon death as a deliverer.

Thus, during three hours Jesus battled without uttering a single complaint. What took place in the midst of those impenetrable shades? The evangelists, who have described the Agony in the garden, are silent concerning this of the Cross. Yet in the end a great cry pierced the gloom, revealing the mystery of these hours of anguish. Saint Mark has preserved these words just as they came from the lips of Jesus, in that familiar Aramean tongue which as a child He had learned at Mary's knee:

"Eloï! Eloï! [11] Lamma sabachthani?"

"My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

This lament is the opening of the psalm wherein the Messiah's Passion is all predicted [12] — His strength ebbing away in streams of blood, His burning wounds and that parching thirst of whose fierceness the dying man alone has any knowledge. But what were those bodily torments compared with the suffering which racked His soul? Indeed it was a mental agony which found an utterance in that cry of distress —

"My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Yet never did any dying soul feel as Jesus felt when now forsaken by God, because none but He alone has ever lived with God and in God. Hanging there, reviled by earth and rejected by Heaven, He lingered in lonely conflict with another Agony like that which passed over Him in Gethsemani; yet this time He drained the cup to the very dregs. To gather any faint idea of the wretchedness which seized Him in His present abandonment, we must remember that despite His own innocence, Jesus when upon the Cross, bore the actual load of our crimes — that He actually had taken upon Himself the wickedness of the world. And now that God had transferred to Him all sins committed from the beginning unto the end of time, these all stood forth distinctly before His dying eyes, together with their very least circumstances. Every treacherous and revengeful deed, the lewd and adulterous works of shame, blasphemies, slanders, and lying — all together surged their foul floods into His Soul, and every other sense was swallowed up under these torrents of iniquity. And it was in this same hour wherein the Christ was, as it were, overwhelmed in that first wild onslaught, that God saw fit to withdraw His Presence from Him, as if to crush Him beneath the weight of His vengeance. Jesus, "having become sin for our sake," being made "a curse and an execration" [13] (according to

11 Matt. xxvii. 46; Mark xv. 34. 12 Ps. xxi. 2, 15, 16. 13 Gal. iii. 13.

Saint Paul's expression), Jesus suffered at the hand of God such unutterable horror as no human tongue can declare. In that hour Heaven drew away from Him into the darkness; Hell alone remained before the Saviour's sight — wherein was disclosed that never-ending despair, eternal, infinite, even as is the God whose penalty it is.

One lowermost depth of sorrow had still to be reached; it was the knowledge of how scanty was the number of souls who should profit by His Passion. The multitude of the damned were all marshalled before His eyes; however unworthy, they were the members of His mystical Body, so closely united to Him that they could not be separated from Him without violence. And as He saw this dearly loved portion of Himself about to be wrested from Him, Jesus felt that He indeed, like them, was left destitute and reprobate forever.

"He mourned," says Arnaud de Chartres, "that the fruit of His struggles should be torn from Him; He cried aloud that His sweat, His toils, and His death, were thus bereft of their reward; since those for whom He had suffered so much were abandoned to everlasting perdition." This, then, was what wrung from Him that mournful cry:

"My God! My God! dost Thou abandon Me?"

But how can we make this moment of apparent despair to which Jesus yielded harmonise with the blessedness essential to His divine personality? Herein again there is involved an unfathomable mystery, the Mystery of the Incarnation. To comprehend how the Son of God could speak of Himself as forsaken by His Father, we should first need to explain how the Infinite Being could take upon Himself a finite nature; for between these two humiliations there is only a difference of degree — the abandonment of Jesus upon the Cross only continued what was first accomplished in the Incarnation, and in these two Mysteries the Godhead remains equally inviolable. With the Christ in His anguish it was even as with those mountain chains whose white crests pierce the clouds. Often the tempests do havoc with their rugged sides, strewing them with the wreckage of the storm; yet naught can trouble the snowy peaks, which, far, far above the whirlwind's reach, stand evermore serene and crowned with light.

In that same hour, the darkness disappearing, and with it the mists of fear, forthwith the Jews found courage to reecho those words of Jesus — feigning to mistake the divine Name of *Eli* for that of the prophet.[14]

"He is calling upon Elias," they said.

Yet even by this jibe they confessed to the throes of terror they had just felt; for all Israel knew that the awful seer was to reappear upon a day of terror and blazing fire, beneath cloud hung skies and a moon like blood, when all the heavenly powers would tremble in their spheres.

All at once another cry was heard.

"I thirst," [15] Jesus said, giving tongue to the most excruciating pangs of crucifixion.

One of the bystanders hurriedly dipped a sponge into the soldier's bitter drink

14 Mark xv. 35. 15 John xix. 28, 29.

and offered it to the Saviour; and as his arm could not reach so high as the head of the Sufferer, he took a reed,[16] set the sponge upon the end of its stem, and put it to the lips of the Christ. His deed of mercy drew forth a shriek of hatred from the mob:

"Let be! Let be! and see if Elias will come to save him!"

"Let me alone," said the man; "we shall see, all the same, whether Elias will save him." [17]

The Saviour pressed His lips to the sponge soaked with vinegar; then, with quickened powers, He fixed His gaze upon the world of men below Him. In a trice His glance swept the whole duration of time and all His Work. He beheld the righteous who had gone before Him, and all those who in after days were to believe in Him who would find their way to His Cross, and there obtain their salvation.

"It is finished!" [18] He said; everything is consummated — My Passion, My Life, and the Salvation of mankind.

Having spoken this last farewell to earth, He gave Himself into His Heavenly Father's keeping.

"Father," He cried with a loud voice, "into Thy hands I restore My Spirit." [19]

It was the voice of a son throwing himself into the arms of his father, yet it was likewise the utterance of "Him from Whom no one taketh His Soul, but Who layeth it down whensoever it pleaseth Him." [20]

Most of the disciples who were gazing upon this scene from afar, only heard "the great cry" mentioned by Saint Matthew and Saint Mark.[21] So, then, it must have been from some witness standing closer to the Cross, perchance from Mary's own lips, that Saint Luke learned Jesus' last words. John, too, was there, gazing upon the Saviour; and he saw that He had bowed down His Head upon His breast and that He was dead.[22]

CHAPTER VII

THE TOMB OF JESUS

Matt. xxvii. 51–66; Mark xv. 38–47; Luke xxiii. 45, 47–56; John xix. 31–42

"Immediately the veil [1] of the Temple was rent from the top clean to the bottom and torn in twain; the earth quaked, rocks were cloven asunder, graves opened, and many bodies of the Saints who had slept rose from their tombs."

The Roman centurion was the first to bow down before the evidence of these prodigies. With his soldiers he had remained on Calvary, standing "over against Jesus;" [2] but when he felt the earth trembling beneath his feet, and

16 John xix. 29.
17 Matt. xxvii. 49; Mark xv. 36.
18 John xix. 30.
19 Luke xxiii. 46.
20 John x. 18.
21 Matt. xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37.
22 John xix. 30.
1 Matt. xxvii. 51, 52.
2 Mark xv. 39.

beheld the Christ "in death, sending forth that great cry," "fear fell upon him, his eyes were opened, and he gave glory to God."

"Ay, truly this was a just man," he cried, "this was indeed the Son of God."

And forthwith his faith affected the frightened legionaries, and the cry arose: "Truly, this was the Son of God!" [3]

That confession from the lips of heathen men, in presence of the expiring Christ, sealed the condemnation of the Jews. And they, seeing what had come to pass, withdrew from thence, striking their breasts.[4] Soon upon Golgotha two little groups of men and women were left clustered together, though separated according to sexes, as is the Eastern custom. On one side were the disciples of Jesus, all those who had known Him so well, finally united together in the common love they bore their Saviour; somewhat further away stood the women, who had followed Him from Galilee, with many others who had accompanied Him hither from Jerusalem. In silence all were watching Him Whom they had loved so dearly.[5] Among them we once more meet the Magdalene and Mary mother of James, whom we had left at the foot of the Cross, and with them Salome, the mother of Zebedee's sons. The gaze of everyone there was fixed upon the body of the Master, for they clung to the hope, seeing the marvels whereat even the Jews were confounded, that all was not ended even yet.

Jesus had succumbed about the ninth hour, but the two companions of His sufferings, if nothing shortened their torments, had still several hours of agony before them. Now the law prescribed that no condemned person should be left upon the gibbet longer than one day,[6] and for the day before the Passover this commandment was more imperative than ever, since it was not fitting that that Holy Day should be desecrated by the spectacle of such crucified bodies. The Jews therefore went in search of Pilate,[7] and requested him to have the legs of the condemned men broken, so that they might be removed the sooner.

The Governor despatched another band of soldiers to Calvary. Taking heavy clubs they broke the legs and thighs of the two thieves; but coming to Jesus, they found only a dead body. To break His limbs would be an unnecessary labour; so one of the soldiers in order to make certain that the corpse was altogether lifeless, buried his lance in the right side.

Saint John, who was at the foot of the Cross, saw a stream of water and of blood flow forth from His breast.

"He that saw it," he says, speaking of himself, "gave testimony thereto, and his testimony is true, and he knows that he says true, that you also may believe, for these things were done that the scripture might be fulfilled: 'You shall not break a bone of Him;' [8] and furthermore, the Scripture saith again: 'They shall look upon Him Whom they pierced.' " [9]

To Saint John's eyes, this last act of the Passion was therefore at once the fulfilment of a prophecy and a symbol of future grace. The spear-thrust which prevented a bone of Jesus from being broken made Him of a truth the

3 Luke xxiii. 47; Mark xv. 39; Matt. xxvii. 54.
4 Luke xxiii. 48.
5 Mark xv. 40, 41.
6 Deut. xxi. 23.
7 John xix. 31–37.
8 Exod. xii. 46.
9 Zach. xii. 10.

real Paschal Lamb, the veritable food of the New Israel; while the water and the blood now spilled from His wound foreshadowed on the one hand His Baptism, with the life-giving ablutions of grace, and on the other, His blood divine in the blessed Eucharist.

As evening crept on,[10] a Jew who had not hitherto appeared upon Calvary, suddenly presented himself among the soldiers. His name was Joseph of Arimathea, and he was a member of the tribunal which had condemned Jesus. Rich, powerful, and of noble mien, he had hitherto lacked courage to declare himself in favour of the Lord, for fear of the Sanhedrin, and consideration of his own rank had held him back. Nevertheless he was a good and just man, who was awaiting the Kingdom of God, and had made himself one of the Lord's disciples. Moreover, he had allowed his feelings to be known abroad by firmly refusing any assent to his colleagues' counsels and actions.[11] The Master's death had finally conquered him; at the season when all were shuddering with fear, a sudden boldness sprang up within him.

He came to Calvary, and there found the soldiers preparing to take down the corpses, so as to bury them together with the instruments of execution; but he obtained from the centurion who had just now confessed his belief in the Christ's divinity that he would accord him such delays as he deemed necessary. Joseph then boldly presented himself before Pilate and besought the body.[12]

The governor's first thought on learning of the decease of Jesus was one of astonishment; so sudden an end to this torture was a thing unheard of. Having had the centurion brought before him, he inquired of him whether Jesus was really dead already. Upon hearing his account he no longer hesitated to put faith in Joseph's word, and willingly granted him the Saviour's body, for it was Roman usage never to refuse this consolation to the friends of the condemned. The stars whose first beams would announce the beginning of the Sabbath, had not as yet shone out through the twilight, so Joseph had still sufficient time to purchase the linen shroud, with the winding sheet, in preparation for the burial; accordingly with these he returned to Calvary, where, aided by the disciples, he lifted Jesus down from the Cross.

The season of humiliations was passed now. His body, nailed to a criminal's gibbet, was to be entombed with becoming decency. Another prince of Israel now helped to prepare His resting place. It was Nicodemus, the famous scribe who once went by night to hold converse with Jesus. Trembling before his fellow councillors of the Sanhedrin, he had until now dissembled his real faith; but the sight of those wonders and Joseph's example had triumphed over his weakness, and he followed fast upon his footsteps to Calvary, eager to lavish his wealth upon the Master Whose fate he was now bewailing.[13] Perfumes and spices to the value of a hundred pounds, were brought thither by his orders; it was a compound of myrrh and aloes ground and mixed together. With this the bleeding wounds were covered, while they proceeded to pass the long linen bands about the body, the arms, and the legs; according to Jewish custom, the

10 Mark xv. 42.
11 Luke xxiii. 51.
12 Mark xv. 43–45.
13 John xix. 39, 42.

winding sheet enveloped His head — and thus swathed in costly ointments, Jesus was borne to the tomb. They must needs hasten, for the Sabbath was almost upon them; they had only these swiftly fleeting moments of eventide, wherein to complete the sepulture of the Lord.

The found the sepulchre already prepared; for near the place of the Cross, Joseph of Arimathea owned a garden where there was a tomb hollowed out of the rock, which as yet had never been used for any man. This he now consecrated to the Master's service, since the nearness of the Sabbath made it impossible to carry Him farther. Such burial caves, chiselled out of the cliff-side, were made in the form of narrow halls, wherein niches or rows of benches were arranged to receive the bodies. You entered these tombs on a level with the ground or by a gentle decline, and the mouth was closed with a stone, difficult to stir from its solid base. Jesus was laid upon one of these funeral couches. With the help of their companions, these pious Sanhedrin councillors hurriedly pushed the heavy door athwart the entranceway; then all returned homeward to the city, over which the calm of a Sabbath night had not fallen, subduing all mankind to silence — the holy quiet of the night of the Great Sabbath.

Meanwhile the saintly women had followed Joseph throughout; [14] they had noticed with what haste the two noble councillors had fulfilled their office, with all else that was still wanting to make the burial worthy of the Christ. So, having observed keenly where they had laid Jesus, the weeping women returned to prepare their aromatic unguents; "and on the Sabbath day rested, according to the commandments."

Nevertheless, after their departure the garden was not left entirely deserted; two women still lingered there, sitting over against the door of the Sepulchre. They were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, mother of Joses and the Blessed Virgin's sister.

In vain had the enemies of Jesus hoped that His death would bring them respite from all future anxiety. Hardly was He safely housed in the grave before they recalled His predictions.[15] Had He not proclaimed that upon the third day He would rise again; that He meant to vouchsafe them but one sign — the sign of the prophet Jonas, buried three days beneath the waves only to come forth with a fuller life; that a mystic Temple should be destroyed only to be builded up again in three days?

Recollections like these robbed them of that night's rest; their anxiety and fearfulness were so overpowering that we see them, in the early dawn, already assembling again. And this notwithstanding that it was the day after the Parasceve, as Saint Matthew remarks — the morning of their great Paschal Sabbath. But everything must yield before these importunate terrors, even the hallowed repose of this day; thus they braved such a sacrilege as this in order to hold conference with a pagan, upon the one solemnest day of the year.

Pontiffs and Pharisees forthwith betook themselves to Pilate's residence.

"My Lord," they began, "we have just remembered that this impostor, while he still lived, said: 'After three days I will rise again.' Give orders that the

14 Luke xxiii. 55, 56. 15 Matt. xxvii. 62-66.

sepulchre be guarded until the third day, for fear that his disciples should come, and steal him away, and tell the people: 'He is risen from the dead.' For then the last error would be worse than the first."

"Take some of the guards," answered Pilate; "go, guard it as well as you know how."

They started off straightway, and, to make more sure that no one should secretly open the sepulchre, they sealed up the huge stone and stationed before it their guard of Roman soldiers.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESURRECTION

I. The First Apparitions

Matt. xxviii. 1–15; Mark xvi. 1–11; Luke xxiv. 1–12; John xx. 1–18

While the Sanhedrin party were busied in taking precautions against Jesus, the great middle class of Jews had deserted Calvary to devote themselves to preparations for the Paschal ceremonies. Throughout this day what feelings swept over the hearts of the disciples? Was it not the end of everything for them — their dreams all shattered, their discouragement and grief more overpowering in the measure that their expectations had been so full of life and righteous hopes? We might justly confess to a great longing to know something of the conversation of these men, after having been so bitterly undeceived, to hear their complaints and sympathise with their passionate regrets. But the Gospel is silent concerning the exceeding wretchedness they must have felt that day; and we are told simply of their fidelity to the Law: "According to the commandment," it reads, "the Sabbath rest was observed." [1]

But though no one expected aught thereafter from their buried Master, still they loved Him always. The last to leave His grave, the women who had followed Him from Galilee were the first to return to the tomb, eagerly desirous to embalm the Saviour's body with greater care than Nicodemus had been able to do. Most of them had had time to prepare myrrh and sweet spices, after the Crucifixion; but having returned from Calvary later, Mary Magdalene, with Mary the mother of James, and Salome, were unable to purchase their perfumes till the evening of the morrow, after the hallowed season of rest; but by midnight of that next day everything was in readiness, whereupon they arose and set forth, to fulfil their last pious duty to the dead.

It was still dim [2] and misty when, fairly anticipating the first day of the new week, they passed the city walls.

"Who will help us to remove the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre?" they kept murmuring to each other as they hastened along.

Listening to these words, we may presume that Mary Magdalene, Mary

1 Luke xxiii. 56. 2 Matt. xxviii. 1.

mother of James, and Salome (whom Saint Mark mentions) were at this juncture still alone; for with their united strength the holy women together would have foreseen no difficulty in pushing away the heavy door of the tomb. Doubtless their companions were following them in the meanwhile, though they were as yet some way behind them.

The three women of Galilee were at some distance from the garden, when of a sudden the darkened earth quivered beneath their feet. An angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and drawing nigh rolled back the stone which blocked the mouth of the sepulchre. It was long since tenantless, for Jesus had risen before the dawn,[3] in a great stillness and all unseen. And the angel sat upon the stone; his countenance glowing brighter than the lightning, his garments all of a whiteness like the dazzling snow; whereupon the guards were struck with such fearfulness that they fell down like dead men, and as soon as might be one and all fled back to town.

Too far away from the tomb to witness what had just happened, the holy women were fain to hesitate for an instant, but reassured by the ensuing quiet they pushed their way within the shadowy garden, and at last making bold to raise their eyes and look about, they beheld the stone drawn away, for it was very great.

At this sight the Magdalene made all haste to Jerusalem.

"Past all question," she thought, "the Master's tomb has been violated and His body abandoned to His foes!"

So thinking she runs the faster, she calls with hurried words upon His friends; these friends were John the Beloved and Peter, who, finding his way before this to the latter's abode had fallen down at Mary's feet bewailing his own fault. Thereupon together they mourned the death of Jesus.

"They have taken the Lord away, from out the sepulchre," cried the Magdalene, "and we do not know what they have done with Him."

At once the disciples sped away to the tomb, but found no trace either of Mary, mother of James, or of Salome; they had indeed but just now hurried away, "transported with fear and great joy."

These two women, lingering there alone after Mary Magdalene's swift departure, had finally decided to enter within the tomb.[4] An angel was seated at the right-hand side of the dark cave; he bore the outward aspect of a young man clothed with white raiment.

They trembled much at seeing him, and fear enchained their tongues but he reassured them:

"Fear not ye!" he said, "I know you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified. He is risen, He is no longer here! Come and see the place where they laid him. Go quickly and announce to Peter and the disciples that He is risen from the dead. He will go before you into Galilee: 'tis there that you shall see Him, according as He foretold it to you. Lo, I have warned you thereof beforehand."

[3] Mark xvi. 9.

[4] Mark xvi. 5-8; Matt. xxviii. 5-8.

The two women went forth from the sepulchre, their hearts divided between happiness and terror; but soon their fear overpowered them, and they fled without daring to repeat what they had just now seen and heard.

Meanwhile the two apostles were hastening on their way toward the garden.[5] Both of them were running, but John was first to reach the spot. Dreading to push forward beneath the mouth of the cave, he stooped down to scan the inner gloom, but his eyes could only descry the linen cloths lying on the ground. Hereupon Peter rejoined him, entered unhesitatingly and noted, not only these swathing-bands, but also the napkin wherewith the Lord's head had been enwrapt, now folded and laid apart in a corner by itself. Reassured, John followed his companion and shared his glad surprise.[6] Within the empty sepulchre there were no traces of violence; the burial vestments had been neither snatched away nor hastily left behind, but folded with decent care. At this token the eyes of the apostles were opened; at last they believed what a profounder knowledge of the Scriptures would have revealed to them long before — "that it was necessary that the Christ should rise again from the dead!" And they returned straightway to their homes, overflowing with gladness, marvelling among themselves over this which had now come to pass.[7]

The holy women and the two apostles had believed upon the angel's testimony, but to Mary of Magdala was reserved the privilege of first beholding the risen Jesus. Coming back to the tomb, she stayed without, while, ever and again through her tears she would peer through the dark mouth of the cave. Suddenly she saw two angels, all in white array, seated there where the body of Jesus had been laid, one at the head and the other at the feet.

"Woman," they said to her, "why weepest thou?"

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I know not where they have laid Him."

And, as she was uttering these words, she turned, she knew not why, perceiving the presence there of a man and hearing Him say:

"Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

"It is the gardener," she thought; "perhaps he may have taken the body, to protect it from any insult."

"Sir," she made answer, "if you have taken Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him. I will go and carry Him away."

Jesus spoke but one word in answer.

"Mary!"

And the Magdalene recognised the voice which had so many times comforted her soul. She threw herself at the feet of Jesus, crying:

"Master!"

And in the greatness of her joy, she clung to that transfigured Body.

But Jesus, while reminding her that she was to behold Him again more than once before the Ascension, now bade her return immediately to the apostles.

5 John xx. 3–10. 6 John xx. 6. 7 Luke xxiv. 12; John xx. 8–10.

"Touch Me not," He said, "for I am not yet gone up unto My Father; but go, find My brethren and say to them:

"I go up unto My Father and your Father, to My God and to your God."

Sublime message, whereby the Saviour tells all those whom He came on earth to redeem that henceforth they have no other Father but His, and that one day they shall follow after Him, to His home in the skies.

Mary Magdalene rose up and hastened to carry His words to the disciples.

"I have seen the Lord, and behold this which He hath said to me!"

But as yet neither Peter nor John had returned to find their comrades; Magdalene therefore found them overwhelmed with mourning and tears. In vain did she proclaim that Jesus lived and had appeared to her; her thrilling tones, her glowing certainty and all the great rapture with which the sight of her God had stirred her soul, were powerless to touch them; they would not believe her.

Even while the messenger chosen by the Christ was meeting with such a doleful greeting in Jerusalem, there were other women of Galilee approaching the tomb.[8] They came thither, after the example of the two Marys and Salome, to anoint the body of the Lord, and numbered among them besides certain of the disciples, Joanna, wife of Chuza, the Intendant of Herod Antipas.

At sight of the open sepulchre, they quickened their steps, but, when they had pressed forward within the narrow tomb, they looked about in vain for the body of Jesus. And as they stood spellbound with consternation, all at once, two angels stood by them, in shining garments. Seized with great fright their eyes fell before the glory of the heavenly visitants.

"Why seek ye among the dead for Him Who liveth? He is no longer here. He is risen! Remember that which He said unto you when He was yet in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinners and crucified, and the third day rise again.'"

Recalling those words of the Master at last, they sped back to bear these tidings to the eleven and to all the disciples; but even while they were hastening along the garden path Jesus Himself appeared to them.

"Hail!" He said.[9]

They drew nigh, all trembling, and kissed His feet and worshipped Him.

"Fear not," pursued the Lord, "go tell My brethren that they depart into Galilee; 'tis there they shall see Me."

The holy women obeyed and declared before the apostles that they had seen and touched the risen Body of Jesus; but they credited their words no more than those of Mary Magdalene. All that they said seemed but wild fancy, and they obstinately refused to believe.

Hatred, however, had given the enemies of Jesus a clearer insight than theirs. Warned by some of the guards as to what had occurred, the high priests called together the ancients of Israel, and took counsel as to what it behoved them to do, in order to avert any popular belief in this new prodigy.[10] But there was no time left to concoct any clever explanation; they must content themselves

8 Luke xxiv. 1–11. 9 Matt. xxviii. 8–10. 10 Matt. xxviii. 11–15.

with collecting a considerable sum of money and giving it to the soldiers, telling them:

"You will testify that his disciples came by night and stole away the body, while you were asleep; and if the governor come to know of it, we will appease him and secure you."

The soldiers, taking the money, did as they had been bid, and from mouth to mouth, adds Saint Matthew, this story has been spread among the Jews, even to the present day.

II. The Disciples at Emmaüs. — Jesus in the Supper-Room

Luke xxiv. 13–43; Mark xv. 12–14; John xx. 19–29

Meanwhile the day was slipping away and, besides Peter and John, not one of the disciples as yet believed in the Resurrection of their Master. Toward evening two of their number started out for a walk outside the city walls, taking the road leading to Emmaüs, a village situated some sixty stadia from town, in a westerly direction. The Crucifixion, the wondrous doings at the sepulchre, these rumours noised about by the women, formed the whole theme of their earnest talk. And while their minds were absorbed in these thoughts Jesus drawing near walked beside them, but "their eyes were veiled in such wise that they did not know Him." They became silent, thinking they had to do with a stranger.

"What were you saying?" asked the Lord, "and what were you discussing so earnestly [11] along the way?"

The disciples stopped to look up at Him, with a glance of mingled sorrow and suspicion.

"Stranger," replied one of them, whose name was Cleophas, "are you, then, the only one in Jerusalem ignorant of the things which have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" the Saviour asked.

"Why, concerning Jesus of Nazareth," they responded; and forthwith both, amazed as they were, began to vie with each other in recalling what manner of man was this Jesus — a prophet mighty in work and word before God and all the people.

"Do you not know how the princes of the priesthood, and our chief men, delivered him over to be condemned to death and have crucified him? We indeed had hoped that he would have delivered Israel; moreover and besides all this it is now the third day since these things occurred. It is true, certain women who were of our company have much affrighted us. On going before daybreak to the sepulchre they did not find His body, but returned saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that He is alive. And some of our people went to the sepulchre and found everything as the women had said, but Him they saw not."

All this was indeed nothing short of an avowal that they no longer believed

11 Luke xxiv. 17.

in Jesus, and now only recognised in Him a prophet, who, after blazing forth for an instant in their midst, had disappeared into the vast unknown like so many others. Putting no further trust in a dead leader they were for withdrawing, saddened with the thought of such sweet hopes deceived.

"O foolish and slow of heart," cried their fellow traveller, "who are unable to believe what the prophets have spoken! Did it not behove the Christ to suffer these things and so to enter into His glory?"

And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He explained to them that which was spoken of Him. Throughout this masterwork of inspiration, wherein are given the great outlines of that prophetic figure of the Messiah, it was an easy matter for Jesus to display how, line by line, every feature of His Passion, His Death, and His Resurrection, had been foreshadowed. And yet by themselves what can the Holy Books effect, even when interpreted by lips divine? They can only brighten our eyes with the first rays of faith; to enlighten and convince the soul, God's grace must penetrate it altogether.

The three travellers had reached the hamlet of Emmaüs. Jesus made as though He would go further, but the disciples, all glowing with so much as they had heard of the truth, constrained Him to abide with them.

"Stay with us," they begged, "for it is late and the day is drawing to a close."

Yielding to their entreaties, Jesus entered their stopping-place with them, where the place of honour was set aside for Him, and then as He sat with them at table, He took bread, blessed, brake, and gave it to His companions. But, in the hands of the priest eternal, the grain grown from the ground became the Bread of Heaven, while at once a mighty flood of grace filled to overflowing the hearts of these two disciples; their eyes were opened; at last they recognised Jesus, and though indeed He vanished from them forthwith, their faith in His Resurrection remained none the less firm.

"Is it not true," they cried to one another, "that our hearts were all burning within us while He talked with us on the way, and revealed to us the meaning of the scriptures?"

And they rose up that same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, to acquaint the apostles with what had happened.

They found the eleven gathered together in the Supper Room, and as they entered were greeted with these words:

"The Lord is truly risen. He has appeared to Simon." [12]

Thereupon they in their turn related what had occurred by the wayside, and how they had known Him in the breaking of bread. But their tale did not obtain the same credence as had that of Peter; this wayfarer, walking along beside them, and breaking bread at table with them, this was no longer the Christ in His triumph, Whom Simon and the holy women had adored. Far from confirming their newborn faith, this new testimony only contributed to increase the doubts still springing up in their unsettled minds; and so among those gathered around the table where the apostles sat at supper, unbelief continued to be in the ascendancy, when all at once Jesus stood in their midst.[13]

12 Luke xxiv. 34. 13 John xx. 19.

"Peace be with you," He said.

Their first feeling was one of great fear. It was indeed the Lord they beheld with their own eyes. His familiar features, the tones of His voice, even His customary greeting, everything precluded the possibility of mistake.

"But how could He have entered with no noise, though the doors were shut for fear of the Jews? Might it not be a spirit?" And their terror increased.

Jesus reassured them.

"It is I," He said; "fear nothing! [14] Why are you troubled and reason thus in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet! 'Tis indeed I Myself. Touch, and consider that a spirit hath neither flesh nor bones, as you see that I have."

And showing them His pierced hands and His feet, uncovering His side, He bade them contemplate and handle His flesh and His wounds.

Overwhelmed with wondering awe, the apostles still stood amazed. One last sign was needed to convince them.

"Have you here anything to eat?" asked Jesus.

A piece of roasted fish and some honeycomb were lying upon the table. Of these He ate — not that He was hungry, but to show that His risen body had kept its nature unchanged. Thereupon taking the fragments, He gave them to the apostles.

Peace being restored within their troubled minds, Jesus reproached His own for the hardness of their hearts, because they would not believe those who had beheld Him risen from the tomb. Yet straightway He was moved to compassion for these earthly minded mortals, and only strove to strengthen their courage by comfortable promises.[15]

"Peace be unto you all," He said again; "as My Father hath sent Me, I send you."

Then, breathing upon them, as a sign that He communicated unto them His power,

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost," He said; "the sins which you remit shall be remitted, those that you retain shall be retained."

Never was any higher authority conferred on man; for by these words Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Penance and gave to mortals the power of disposing of eternal treasures, the right of opening and shutting the gates of Heaven.

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus appeared in the supper-room.[16] Of all he was most prone to doubt; so when the joyous disciples greeted him with the words, "We have seen the Lord!" he only answered them:

"Except I shall see in His hands the mark of the nails, and lay my finger upon the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Nevertheless, distrustful as Thomas showed himself to be, he was none the less deeply attached both to the Master Whom he now mourned, and to his brethren whose renewed faith and gladness he envied. Eight days later we

14 Luke xxiv. 36. 15 John xx. 21–23. 16 John xx. 24–29.

find him again in their company, though as ever incredulous, and consumed at heart with sad regrets.

Then, just as formerly, the doors of that upper chamber being fast closed, Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples.

"Peace be unto you!" He said. Then speaking to Thomas:

"Put forth thy finger here and see My hands, reach hither thy hand and place it in My side, and be not faithless, but believing."

"My Lord and my God," cried out the apostle.

He no longer asked to touch the wounds of the Saviour, but prostrate at His feet worshipped Him and implored His forgiveness.

For all rebuke, Jesus contrasted this tardy submission with the great merit and happiness of those many souls who should believe in Him without having seen Him:

"Thomas, thou hast believed because thou hast seen Me. Blessed are they that without seeing have believed!"

CHAPTER IX

THE FORTY DAYS

I. Jesus Appearing to His Disciples in Galilee

John xxi. 1–24; Matt. xxviii. 16–20; Mark xvi. 15–28

As now the last days of the Paschal tide were over, very many of the disciples set forth from Jerusalem to return home to Galilee. It was there the Master had declared, even before His death, that He would precede them; and now the angels and the resurrected Christ Himself had reiterated this promise.[1] Accordingly they all hastened toward that country, selected by Jesus not without special design. Indeed, by this withdrawing His Presence to that region He avoided any collision with the Sanhedrin people; any solemn manifestation of Himself there was much less dangerous than at Jerusalem, where hatred kept His foes ever watchful, and ready to instantly exterminate the newborn Church, had she ventured to publish abroad the triumph of her head.

The apostles were the first to obey the Lord's behests, and shortly after this seven of their number chanced to be gathered on the lakeshore of Genesareth. "There were together Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the two sons of Zebedee. The two other disciples are not named, but the presence of Peter makes us think at once of Andrew, his brother, and also of Philip, their fellow townsman and Andrew's usual companion.

The community funds, whereby their daily needs had been provided for, had disappeared with Judas. Peter's eyes fell upon his boat and nets.

1 Mark xvi. 7; Matt. xxviii. 10.

"I go a-fishing," he said.

All started up at once, replying:

"We too will go with you."

It was near the twilight hour, the most propitious time for fishing; they started, pushed out with their boat, and for a long time trailed across those waters, whose likeliest spots they knew so well; but their efforts were fruitless; all that night they took nothing.

At dawn they were still dragging along near the banks, when they descried a man standing upon the beach.

It was Jesus, but as yet they did not recognise Him.

"Children," said He, "have you anything to eat?"

"No," they answered Him.

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat," He said, "and you shall find."

The grave authority of the words struck the apostles; the remembrance of a similar prodigy, happening on these same waters and at this very hour, after just such another night of barren toil, at once darted across their minds. Instantly they cast the net, but were unable to draw it up again, so loaded down was it with fish. At this token the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter:

"It is the Lord!"

And Simon Peter, when he heard it was the Lord, snatched his coat and girt it about him (for during the work he had thrown off his outer garments), and that he might rejoin the Master sooner, sprang into the lake. The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net with them toward shore, which was now only about two hundred cubits distant.

So soon, then, as they had set foot on land, they saw a fire of lighted coals with a fish laid thereon, and bread.

"Bring hither some of the fishes which you have caught," Jesus said to them.

Simon Peter again got into the boat and hauled the net to land, now filled with an hundred and fifty-three great fishes; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

"Come!" then said Jesus; "come, eat!"

The disciples sat down around the fire; then the Master stepping forward, took up the bread and the meats, and passed them about among them.

Thus, then, the apostles found themselves once more in the same familiar spot and at the Master's side, just as formerly when in the olden days, after long hours of teaching and preaching, He would take them off by themselves, and explain to them the hidden meaning of His public discourses. But there could be no longer on their part the same free fellowship, for now more than erstwhile He might well say that "He was no longer of this world."[2] This thought, the very sight of their resurrected Lord, overwhelmed the minds of all present, and this morning's meal was finished in silence.

Hardly had it come to an end, when Jesus turned toward Peter.[3]

"Simon, son of Jonas," He said to him, "lovest thou Me more than these?"

2 John xvii. 11. 3 John xxi. 15-17.

"More than these?" what a reproach for the apostle, ever mindful of his presumptuous boast —

"Even though all should deny Thee, yet not I!"

Simon understood — in Jesus' eyes he seemed now only the son of Jonas; "Peter" and the firmness once fore-tokened by that name, had disappeared. Thinking thus, he bowed his head in grief.

"Lord," he said humbly, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"Feed my lambs," replied Jesus, confirming him in his functions as the shepherd of souls.

But for a power so lofty as this, there must needs be assured and solid foundations; wherefore Jesus again sounded the depths of Peter's heart.

"Simon, son of Jonas," He repeated, "lovest thou Me?"

This time the Master spared His apostle any further comparison with his brethren, nor did He make allusion to his fall. And Peter humbly bowed his head once more:

"Lord," he reiterated, "Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Then, as though the greater the trial, so much the more of confidence could be placed in his humility, Jesus said once more:

"Guard My young sheep," thereby committing to his charge, no longer the lambs of the fold only, but the maturer portion of the flock as well, whom henceforth he must needs both pasture and lead onward and defend from every danger.

But a third protestation of his sincerity was requisite to complete the expiation of Peter's threefold denial.

"Simon, son of Jonas," his Master demanded once again, "lovest thou Me?"

Jesus no longer asked the apostle whether he adored Him as his God, but whether he loved Him passionately with the real warmth of charity.

Grieved at heart to hear Jesus still questioning him thus for the third time, Peter was sadly troubled. Yet having learned at last to distrust his own strength, he threw himself upon the tender mercy of Him Who searcheth the reins and the hearts.

"Lord," he cried, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Thenceforth the humility of the son of Jonas was proven beyond doubt, and his love accounted worthy of the highest favours of God. Wherefore one last sentence from the lips of Jesus made him once for all the infallible teacher, the judge from whom there is no appeal, the supreme Shepherd of the Church.

"Feed My sheep," Jesus saith; no longer the lambs only, but "both the lambs and the sheep — the mothers as well as their little ones, and the pastors likewise, shepherds as regards their own people, but sheep also in the eyes of Peter." And these sheep, these pastors of the nations, must receive all things from the Prince of the Apostles; from him they must obtain jurisdiction, power, doctrine. In a word, all that Jesus had been to them hitherto Peter hereafter was to be, and, according to the expression consecrated by centuries of faith, was even now become the Vicar of Christ on earth. Yet truly this commission was dear-

bought; for to walk in the likeness of Jesus it would be necessary for the apostle to make his life the reflection of his Master's sufferings, and carry the imitation of his Model even unto the death of the Cross.

"Of a truth, of a truth, I say to thee," added the Lord, "when thou wast young thou didst gird thine own self, and didst walk whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not."

By these words, Saint John says, He meant to refer to the death whereby Peter "was to glorify God;" while at the same time they represented the entire life of the apostle — his fiery spirit in youth eager to plunge into action, yet only on condition that he be allowed to gird his loins at his own good time and pleasure; then his riper age, destined to endure the heaviest toils, wherein he would be required to renounce himself altogether, to suffer long and patiently, to bear all contradictions and opprobrium; finally his death on the Cross after the example of his divine Master. And all this conformity to the Saviour's life and death is comprised in that final utterance of the Christ:

"Follow Me!"

Having spoken thus He rose up and withdrew from the circle of the apostles. But Peter, accepting this bidding literally, walked close behind him. Nor was he alone; the disciple whom Jesus loved, he who during the Last Supper had leaned upon His breast and said to Him: "Lord, who will betray Thee?" — this disciple followed also.

Peter, turning about, saw him.

"Lord," he asked, "and what shall befall this one?"

"If I will that he tarry till I come," replied the Saviour, "what is that to thee? Do you follow Me?"

These last words ever remained an enigma to the early believers, and gave rise to the strangest fancies; the saying soon spread abroad that the beloved of Jesus would never die. John in his extreme old age, seeing how great credit had been placed in this fabrication, when writing the closing lines of his Gospel protested that the Lord had not said: "He shall not die"; but "If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee?" But it was useless for the apostle to try to correct the popular misapprehension at even his death and the sight of his tomb could not undeceive them.

"John but sleepeth in his sepulchre," they said; "there he waiteth the coming of the Lord, and the clouds of dust whirling above his grave bear testimony that a living breath ever quickened his ashes."

All that was now left the Saviour to do on earth was the fulfilment of His promise that He would manifest Himself to all His disciples assembled together.[4] For the holding of this first council of all Christendom, He had designated a certain mountain; and here were gathered not only the eleven apostles, but all that Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee could furnish forth of faithful followers, because the Lord's message had been addressed to the whole body of disciples:

"Go and tell My brethren to go into Galilee; 'tis there they shall see Me!" [5]

4 Matt. xxviii. 16–20. 5 Matt. xxviii. 10.

From Saint Paul's testimony we have it that more than five hundred were there met together.

When Jesus appeared the apostles fell down before Him, but even in that congregation there was a movement of hesitation and "some doubted." Neither the voice from Heaven which had summoned them thitherwards, nor the sight of the apostles worshipping the Master, could chase away the trouble which filled their souls at witnessing this apparition. Still they remained standing, speechless, not daring to believe their eyes.

Jesus came forward to this anxious flock.

"All power," He said, "hath been given Me in Heaven and upon earth. Go, then, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teach them to keep all things that I have commanded you, and lo! I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the ages."

And it was not only unto men, but "to every creature" [6] He sent them forth, thus to be the bearers of the good news; for "all creation," fallen with Adam, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together." [7] Jesus had forgotten nothing He had made; extending the redemption bought for them by the Cross unto every created thing. He held forth hope and peace for all in His overflowing hands. Saint Mark's account shows us how that regeneration is consummated by the preaching of the gospel — devils flying before the very name of Jesus, serpents and poison powerless to injure the apostles, every ailment disappearing at the laying on of their hands.

"Go into all the world and preach the glad tidings. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And behold the signs which follow them that believe: They shall cast out devils in My Name; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents" without fear of their venom, "and if they drink any deadly thing it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and the sick folk shall recover."

This appearance was but one of very many manifestations which Jesus made of Himself during these days. We know, likewise, that He showed Himself to James, "the brother of the Lord." [8] Unfortunately the memory of what occurred at this event soon came to be distorted and finally grew into the legend which Saint Jerome read in the "Gospel of the Nazarenes."

"James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, did make an oath after the Last Supper, neither to eat nor to drink aught until he beheld Jesus risen again from the dead. On the morning of the Resurrection, a table appeared before him furnished with food; and the Lord blessed the bread and gave it to James, saying: 'Eat of this bread now, My brother, for the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' "

6 Mark xvi. 15–18. 7 Rom. viii. 22. 8 1 Cor. xv. 7.

II. The Ascension

Acts i. 3–12; Luke xxiv. 44–53; Mark xvi. 19, 20

Forty days had elapsed since the Resurrection; the time had come for Jesus to leave the earth. Whether warned by their Master, or perchance drawn thither by the Feast of Pentecost, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, and there He gathered them about Him once more, probably in the hallowed supper room. For the last time He took His place at the table consecrated by the Eucharistic banquet, and "while eating with them, He bade them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the Father's promise."

"Even that which you have heard," saith He, "from My mouth; for John baptised with water, but before many days hence you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

"Behold!" [9] He added, "the fulfilment of that whereof I told you while I was still with you; but it must needs be that all things which have been written of Me whether in the law of Moses or in the prophets, or in the psalms, should be accomplished." And, even as He spoke, He opened their minds, that they might understand the scriptures; when He added:

"Look! thus it is written: It must needs be that the Christ should suffer, should rise again from among the dead on the third day, and that so penance and remission of sins in His Name be preached throughout the whole world, beginning at Jerusalem. And you indeed are witnesses of these things. I will send the gift which My Father hath promised you; but do you abide in the city till you be endued with strength from on high."

Then Jesus rose up and walked toward the Mount of Olives. The apostles followed, filled with brighter dreams of glory and earthly happiness than ever before; for the sight of the risen Lord proceeding before them rekindled all their old time hopes. They began to believe that even now the moment so long expected when they were to triumph with the Christ had come at last, and pressing nearer they ventured to question Him.

"Master," they asked, "wilt Thou even now restore again the sovereignty of Israel?"

Once more, and for the last time, the Saviour checked the surging ambitions of His children, and renewed His former commandment for them to await the coming of the Holy Spirit, that so they might carry the Gospel tidings unto the whole wide world.

"It is not for you," He told them, "to know the times and the moments which the Father hath put in His own power, but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, which shall descend upon you, and you shall be My witnesses at Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Even Samaria — that land of drunkenness and falsehood to the mind of all Jewry. Nay, the whole wide world, howsoever contaminated by contact with

9 Luke xxiv. 44.

accursed heathendom, was to become the Kingdom of Jesus! Whereupon the apostles realised that this was not the time to question the Master, and they walked on in silence.

Now they were come to the brow of a hill which marks the outskirts of Bethany and the outer limits of Jerusalem. There Jesus stood still, and lifting up His hands He began to bless His apostles. And behold! while blessing them, He was raised up above the mountain tops.[10] A cloud caught Him away out of their sight, and He disappeared into the blue depths of the sky.

The disciples lingered awestruck and overwhelmed with glad wonderment, when all at once two angels formed like unto men, arrayed in garments of surpassing whiteness, stood at their side.[11]

"Men of Galilee," they also said, "why do you still linger here gazing up into the sky? This Jesus Who hath left you to ascend into Heaven shall likewise descend as you have beheld Him going up thither."

These words recalled to the apostles' minds the promise of their Lord, "that He would not leave them orphans, but would return shortly to take them with Him." [12] "Then having adored Him, they returned filled with great joy to Jerusalem, and they were without ceasing in the Temple, praising and blessing God." [13]

The Evangelists' Testimony

Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this Book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is *THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD: and that believing you may have life in His Name* (Saint John xx. 30, 31).

10 Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9; Mark xvi. 19.

11 Acts i. 10, 11.

12 John xiv. 18.

13 Acts i. 12; Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

Jesus, my Saviour and my God, O, bless this book which speaks of Thee. Herein I have but striven to picture the outward features of Thy Life ; the rich treasures of truth and love hidden within Thee, Thy virtues and all Thine inner Life were too exalted for my humble efforts ; but that which I was unable to do, do Thou, O Divine Master, perfect in my stead. Inspire all such as may read these pages with a longing to lay them aside for Thy Gospel ; O, may it help them hereafter to meditate on Thy Life as Thy Saints have ever done, until what time they too shall find Thee therein, — Thyself, even as John and Magdalene knew and loved Thee, even as Peter found and worshipped Thee, revealing unto the world the words of eternal life : "Lord, unto whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life."